

## 120<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON



### LINEAGE

120<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron organized, 28 Aug 1917

Demobilized, 17 May 1919

120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron activated and allotted to NG, 27 Jun 1923

120<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron, 1936

Ordered to active service, 6 Jan 1941

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron (Medium), 13 Jan 1942

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter), 2 Apr 1943 **9 Apr 1943**

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 11 Aug 1943 **15 Aug 1943**

Disbanded, 30 Nov 1943

Reconstituted, 21 Jun 1945

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946

Federal Recognition, 30 Jun 1946

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Squadron, 12 Apr 1951

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 Jul 1955

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Jan 1961 **Oct. 1, 1962**

Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

### STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX, 28 Aug 1917

Ellington Field, TX, 10 Nov 1917  
Garden City, NY, 3-16 Feb 1918  
New Romney, England, 9 Mar 1918  
Stamford, England (detachment at New Romney, England, and Crail, Scotland), 10-27 Aug 1918  
St Maixent, France, 6 Sep 1918  
Tours, France, 17 Sep 1918  
Port of embarkation, France, Feb 1919-unkn  
Mitchel Field, NY, 7-17 May 1919  
Denver, CO, 27 Jun 1923  
Denver Municipal Airport (now Stapleton International Airport), Feb 1938  
Biggs Field, TX, 15 Jan 1941 (flight operated from Laredo, TX, 10 Feb-4 Jul 1942)  
DeRidder AAB, LA, 26 Jul 1942  
Biggs Field, TX, 26 Sep 1942  
Abilene AAFld, TX, 28 Jun 1943  
Esler Field, LA, 13 Sep 1943  
Birmingham AAFld, AL, 14-30 Nov 1943  
***Buckley Field (Later ANGB; AFB), CO, 1946***

#### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Phan Rang AB, Vietnam, 3 May 1968

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Unkn, 28 Aug 1917-Sep 1918  
Second Aviation Instruction Center, Sep 1918-Feb 1919  
Unkn, Feb-17 May 1919  
Colorado NG (divisional aviation, 45<sup>th</sup> Division), 27 Jun 1923  
Third Army, 6 Jan 1941  
III Air Support Command, 1 Sep 1941  
77<sup>th</sup> Observation (later Reconnaissance; Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 12 Mar 1942-30 Nov 1943

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

##### **Mission Aircraft**

O-2C, 1926  
JN-4, 1924  
PT-1, 1927  
BT-1, 1935 O-2K  
O-2H, 1928  
O-17, 1930  
O-38E, 1933  
O-19E, 1935  
O-47A, 1938  
C-43, 1940  
BC-1A AT-6, 1941  
O-49, 1941

P-39, 1942  
P-40, 1942  
UC-78, 1943  
L-5, 1943  
P-51D, 1946  
F-80A/C, 1953  
T-33, 1953  
**F-86D, 1955**  
**F-86E, 1958**  
**F-86F**  
F-86L, 1960  
F-100C, 1961  
F-100D, 1971  
F-100F, 1961  
A-7D, **1974 1975**  
A-7K, 1982  
F-16C, 28 Aug 1991  
F-16D

**Support Aircraft**

C-47, 1946  
A-26, 1946  
T-6, 1946  
C-45, 1949  
C-54, 1964 **1966**  
**T-43, 1979**  
C-131, 1973

**ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS**

02H: 28-349, 28-352  
BT-1: 29-430  
F-80: 29583, 29782, 58597, 90921  
T-43 31154: 0284  
C-131: 550292

F-86  
52-3604  
112988  
53-726  
53-889

F-100				
54-1836	42066	41805	XX031	54-2120
54-1780	42014	31774	XX232	56-3730
41956	41956	31720	52816	

A7D

70986  
72244  
71325  
72252  
7X170  
72199  
70970  
XX248  
73-0996

F-16				
86263	86340	87237	86325	87227
87229	86345	87254	87279	86287
86289	86358	87337	87339	87246
86324	86360	88401	79296	87268
86328	86367	86371	87241	87249
86330	86368	86050	87284	
86338	86370	86052	85460	
86339	87231	87368	86051	

#### **ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES**

F-100: VS

A-7: CO

F-16: CO

#### **UNIT COLORS**

White and blue

When Colorado received the F-86L, it adopted the colorful da-glo scheme augmented by fuselage and tail flashes outlined in yellow. F-86L-55 53-726 had red flashes and drop tank noses for red flight.

F-86L 53-889, seen at Peterson AFB, had blue flashes and drop tank noses for blue flight.

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Once the unit returned from Vietnam, the tail code was removed from its aircraft and replaced with a round style ANG badge and the word COLORADO lettered above it in white.

In May 1969, F-100Ds replaced the earlier-C models. The white tail band is bordered in medium blue, and it has a red C with a yellow disc at its center. The wildcat's head has been moved to a position beneath the windscreen.

Corsair IIs September 3, 1977 The state colors were displayed across the top of the tail and

rudder in the form of a stylized Colorado state flag.

72-0252 was taken in 1989. The state colors were straight blue and white lines Instead of the ribbon style used previously.

A minor difference in tail markings is illustrated here with the addition of white mountain peaks with COLORADO painted in white beneath them. These were located across the top of the tail and rudder, and are difficult to see in this photograph.

F-100C were overall natural metal and had unit markings consisting of a dark blue alar on the fin and rudder.

This alar was trimmed in yellow. The nose of each aircraft was also painted dark blue with a yellow outline. The upper portion of this marking resembled an anti-glare panel, and the sides curved around, down, and back so that the mount for the pilot probe was also painted. A circular style Air National Guard badge was located on both sides of the vertical fin with COLO lettered above it in black.

The squadron was called to active duty in January 1968, and it arrived at Phan Rang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, in May of that year. During that combat tour, the squadron's aircraft carried a VS tail code.

F-100Cs were replaced with F-100Ds. These aircraft carried a variation of the state flag on the fin tip in the shape of a horizontal white band bordered with medium blue. A red C was centered in the band. The red wildcat's face continued to be carried under the windscreen.

## **COMMANDERS**

Maj Carl S. Milliken 1923-1924

Maj William H. Dayton 6 Mar 24-16 May 27

Maj Bruce Kistler 16 May 27-26 Aug 30

Maj Carlos L. Reavis 26 Aug 30-1 Jan 34

Maj Virgil D. Stone 2 Jan 34-13 Mar 38

Maj Frederick W. Bonfils 14 Mar 38-Jan 40

Unknown Jan 40-Oct 40

Maj Harrison W. Wellman, Jr. Oct 40-2 Mar 42

Maj Ralph Baird, #30 Jun 1946

Maj Walter E. Williams, 1948

Maj Warren Harvey, 1955

Maj Wynn Coomer, 1956

LTC Marion P. Barnwell, 1961

Maj Ron L. Jankovsky, 1964

LTC Robert Cherry, 1968

LTC John L. France, Jun 1969

LTC William H. Neuens, May 1971

LTC Robert Flick, 1973

LTC Jack Rosamond 1978

LTC John B. Stone, 1979  
LTC Wayne L. Schultz, 1981  
LTC Clifford Montgomery, 1985  
LTC Mason Whitney, 1986  
LTC Lawrence A. Sitlig, 1988  
LTC Keith Rimer, #2001  
LTC Timothy J. Conklin  
LTC James Fogle Oct 2006-May 2008  
LTC Floyd Dunstan, May 2008 - May 2010

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

World War I  
Strategic Air Forces in Europe, 1 Nov  
Theater of Operations

World War II  
American Theater

### **Campaign Streamers**

None

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

None

### **EMBLEM**

On a black disc, a mountain lion's face and neck affronte, golden brown; eyes and highlights light green; mouth red; teeth white; pupils of eyes, nose, whiskers, shadows, and detail black. (Approved, 12 Apr 1957)

### **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

The secretary of war, on 17 Jun 1932, approved a design to be painted on all airplanes of the 120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron as the official insignia or marking of the squadron. Given in the language of heraldry, the official description of the insignia read: "On a besant and within an annulet azure lies a mountain lion's face proper. The background and border are in the colors of the Air Corps. The mountain lion is known for his fighting qualities, keen observation and agility." The insignia was designed by 1LT Floyd E. Welsh, 120<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron, and was intended to exemplify the squadron's primary duty of observation as well as its fighting spirit.

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

Cougars

## Mile High Militia

### **OPERATIONS**

The 120th Fighter Squadron has operational control and responsibility for the F-16 training mission in the 140th Wing. The 120th Fighter Squadron maintain a mission-ready, multi-role capability to mobilize, deploy and tactically employ forces worldwide for any contingency in support of U.S. national objectives. They are responsible for providing the people and resources necessary for conventional air-to-surface, air superiority, suppression of enemy air defenses, destruction of enemy air defenses and maritime operations.

In November 1917, the 120th Aero Squadron was transferred from Kelly Field to Houston. Only a few U.S. Army Air Service aircraft arrived with the squadron. Most of the JN-4s were shipped in wooden crates by railcar. In December, the first planes from Ellington Field flew over Houston for a benefit for the American Red Cross. A flight of ten JN-4s took off from grass runways and followed the interurban tracks stretching north from Genoa to Houston. Throngs of men, women, and children watched in amazement as the JN-4s flew overhead. The roar of the aircraft was almost drowned out by the wail of sirens and factory whistles as the planes passed over. As the planes circled the city, they dropped paper flyers for the American Red Cross. Next, the formation flew to Camp Logan and then turned south toward Galveston Island.

Air Service unit moved to England in March 1918 and to France in September 1918 to undertake aircraft maintenance for the AEF. Locations: Crail, New Romney, Stamford. To France on September 2, 1918 from Flower Down Camp.

The squadron was demobilized at Mitchel Field, NY, on 17 day 1919. In 1936, its lineage and honors were consolidated with those of the Colorado NG unit which had been inactivated in June 1923.

In 1923, Colorado Secretary of State Carl Milliken, with the assistance of Daniel F. Kearns and several other wartime pilots began the organization of the 120th Observation Squadron, 45th Division Air Service, Colorado National Guard. Milliken was also a major in the Colorado (Army) National Guard. Fourteen officers and 50 enlisted men were needed before the squadron could obtain federal recognition. The lure of the air attracted both vigorous youth and experienced fliers of the state. A newspaper article of the day, announcing unit vacancies for new recruits, boasted, "few branches of the service offer more rapid promotions than the air, and drill duties are about as attractive as any soldier could imagine." Aviation still held its attraction for those who "dared its service."

Recruiting completed, the squadron was mustered into state service June 27, 1923, a few days after a high-level conference of all 45th Division adjutants general was held in Denver. Col. Paul P. Newton was the Adjutant General of Colorado at the time.

The 120th Observation Squadron was initially composed of eight officers and 50 enlisted men, with Maj Milliken, who still served as Colorado's secretary of state, commanding. Other officers assigned were: Cpt William H. Dayton; First Lieutenants Charles W. Keene, Don P. Logan, Edward J. Brooks and Malcolm G. Robinson; and Second Lieutenants J. Harold Corder and

Harley H. Montague. Except for Maj Milliken, all of the officers were former Air Service pilots. Most had seen service during World War I.

The squadron was inspected for federal recognition by Maj A. H. Mueller, Cavalry Instructor, Colorado National Guard, on the date of muster, June 27, 1923. In June 1928, the 45th Division Air Service, Colorado National Guard, headquartered in Denver, was redesignated the 45th Division Aviation, Colorado National Guard. With Flight A located at Denver and Flight B at Pueblo. Flight B relocated to Denver on 30 June 1928.

Colorado now had a military aviation unit, there were several important features precluding an active training program. First, the squadron lacked facilities. The unit had no land, buildings or airstrip. Second, the 120th had no airplanes, cameras or other necessary equipment. Until the unit could report to the War Department that it had acquired a suitable flying field, it was in danger of losing its federal recognition.

Undaunted by these problems, the fledgling squadron proceeded to build a flying organization. Through the help of several spirited citizens and the tireless efforts of Maj Milliken, 80 acres of land were acquired for an airfield just to the east of the Present location of the Park Hill Golf Course at East 38th Avenue and Dahlia Street, near City Park in the Park Hill section of Denver.

The land was graded, plowed and seeded, and by the end of the 1923 summer, the field enjoyed the distinction of being one of the best equipped National Guard air service fields in the country.

The field was on the main line of the Union Pacific Railroad from Denver to Kansas City, with a siding that made possible the delivery of airplanes and parts. A quarter of a million dollars was invested in the planes, hangars and other equipment, and an additional \$35,000 a year was allocated to the unit for its air service payroll. Officers received pay for four days each month and enlisted men were paid \$1 for each day of service.

The gasoline and supply bill each year, also paid by the War Department, came to about \$15,000. the observation squadron had not yet received its first allocation of aircraft, the two hangars of steel and iron, procured from the government, could house up to 15 aircraft each in the flying field four miles northeast of Denver's business section. New buildings for the photographic section, as well as lockers, offices, classrooms and quarters for the enlisted men and employed personnel, were constructed the following year.

Since Maj Milliken was not a flying officer, he was ineligible to continue commanding the squadron. So, in February 1924, the major resigned and was succeeded by Cpt William H. Dayton, an experienced pilot with some 800 hours of flying time. Dayton was promoted to major the following month. Maj Milliken was instrumental to the creation of the 120th Observation Squadron; he was primarily responsible for organizing the new squadron and acquiring the land and facilities for the unit.

A U.S. Army Air Service instructor, 1Lt Floyd N. Shumaker, reported for duty as instructor to the squadron during the same time frame. He was frequently augmented by additional Army instructors during the unit's formative years.

One month after the dedication of Lowry Field, the new unit's first airplanes were received. They were eight Curtiss J.N, better known as Jennies. As Pvt. Stanford W. Gregory recalled. "The Jennies arrived in Denver by train from the aviation supply depot at San Antonio. Loaded in two boxcars and parked at a Union Pacific Railroad siding just north of the old field, the planes came unassembled. After a squad of men unloaded the fuselages wings and landing gear, they put wheels on the airplanes and towed them into the nearby hangar. The Jennies were assembled without benefit of manuals. Canvas-covered wings were stretched over wooden frames and Wright 180-horsepower engines were added to ready the airplanes for flight." There was some doubt at first that the Jennies, deemed "suicide crates" by some wary pilots, would be able to fly at an elevation of 5,280 feet, the mile-high altitude of the field.

On June 27, 1924, after careful planning, MSgt. Daniel Kearns fastened himself inside the aircraft and, with goggles over his eyes, pushed the throttle forward. Within a few seconds he was airborne, traveling at the then-incredible speed of 75 miles per hour. After completing several passes over the field, Kearns landed to the approving cheers of fellow squadron members. Danny Kearns, commissioned a first lieutenant in the unit in 1923, test-flew all the unit's early aircraft. He became one of early military aviation's foremost pioneers in subsequent years.

The first flight was successful and it was soon discovered that the thin, bumpy air made flying the Jennie during daytime hours a futile effort. Pilots were forced to gain flying hours immediately after sunrise and just prior to sundown, when the air was heavier and less turbulent. Experienced squadron pilots felt the ships would never get off the ground carrying the full load required under military regulations. Nicknamed the Red Eye squadron many years later, the future call-sign could have easily described those "O-dark-thirty-mission" fliers.

The squadron carried on successfully despite the inconvenient hours. Pilots familiarized themselves with observation activities while maintenance, radio, photographic, air gunnery and intelligence sections trained in their duties. New students were sent to Brooks Field, Texas, for flying instruction. Successful completion of an eight-month course qualified flying candidates with a junior pilot rating. The unit eventually received later-model Jennies with 180-horsepower, Hispano-Suiza engines. Flying could be accomplished at any time during the day with the more powerful airplanes. Missions usually took place every Sunday, frequently with enlisted men as passengers.

The first field training camp of the squadron was held at Lowry Field in August 1924. There was no housing at the field and the squadron was under canvas for the period of the camp, a very comprehensive training program was completed under Army instructor Lt. Shumaker's supervision.

Many improvements were soon made at old Lowry Field. The field was leveled and a number of new buildings were erected, including a mess hall, a club room, an administration building and an emergency hospital. Squadron pilots continued to progress in their aviation accomplishments. During the summer of 1925, Cpt Robinson and Lt. Kearns made a round-trip flight from Denver to New York City that took six days.

The squadron's second summer encampment in August 1925 included aerial gunnery, radio and ground communication work, and a number of cross-country flights. The roar of great de Havilland Army service ship engines, flown up from Texas for the training, woke Park Hill residents at daylight, serving as community alarm clocks throughout the training. Similar training and a tactical war game, with the division split into two rival armies, were included in the squadron's 15-day encampment a year later. Radio and panel communication, bombing, formation flying and scouting were practiced. Particular attention was given to compiling highly informative observation maps to be used by infantry commanders. The Army Air Corps provided equipment designed to allow Morse code communication within a 1,000-mile radius of Denver.

Maj Dayton and his staff, accompanied by Adjutant General, Col. Paul Newton, inspected every aspect of the training camp, from aircraft down through the squadron's quarters, mess hall and the men in uniform. Quoting from the biannual report of the Adjutant General of Colorado for the years 1925 and 1926: "The Air Corps has been very successful in all its operations during the period of this report. But for the untimely death by accident of 2Lt Jesse E. Heinsohn at Pueblo, Aug. 21, 1926, and 2Lt Robert B. Rolando at Lowry Field, Sept. 29, 1926, we should feel that the record is exceptionally good."

The Jennies were practically the sole equipment of the squadron during the years from 1924 through 1926. Colorado's air units now belonged to the 45th Division Air Corps, Colorado National Guard.

In January 1926, two O-2Cs were received. In May 1927, four PT-1s. Similar in construction and size and slightly more efficient than the Jennie, the 180 horsepower PT-1 was of little value in daylight observation duties in mountainous areas due to down drafts and insufficient engine power. Midday observation missions could be flown by the O-2Cs. The 10 original Jennies were placed on a Report of Survey and eventually destroyed by burning in the fall of 1927. In 1928, the O-2Cs were replaced by three O-2Hs. The new planes were equipped with navigation and landing lights to boot.

Earlier in 1927, the 120th had flown their first mercy mission. Silverton had been cut off from the outside world for six weeks due to devastating snowstorms. Snow blocked railroad tracks and trains could not get through. The town had ample food, water and heat to see them through, an outbreak of typhoid fever brought an urgent request for help. The 120th was asked if they could deliver emergency typhoid vaccine; Danny Kearns said he would give it a go. On March 7, 1927, Lt. Daniel Kearns, accompanied by unit adviser MSgt. Clyde Plank, took off in a Douglas O-2C to render aid to the snowbound citizens. Located in southwestern Colorado and completely ringed by 11,000 to 14,000-foot mountains, there was no other way into Silverton but by air. Though other pilots had been driven back by severe storms over the Continental Divide, the two intrepid airmen made it through to deliver much needed antitoxin, newspapers and a package of mail. The orders of the Adjutant General, authorizing the flight, directed them to not only provide assistance, but to gather data that could be used for future excursions into the mountains under similar emergency conditions.

From reading Lt. Kearns flight description, submitted to the Airways Officer in Washington, D. ,

it would appear the trip was a normal, routine mission. Plotting the flight on a map shows that Kearns and Plank flew over a great distance and treacherous terrain in the dead of a cold Colorado winter at altitudes ranging from 14,000 to 18,000 feet. Neither airman used bottled oxygen during the flight. The O-2C was an open-cockpit aircraft driven by an under-powered 400 horsepower Liberty engine. Airborne at 8:30 that Tuesday morning, the O-2C circled old Lowry Field for thirty minutes to reach an altitude of 10,000 feet, sufficient to cross the first range of the Rockies. They crossed the foothills above Golden at 14,000 feet and proceeded to Buena Vista. Winds were so fierce at the beginning of the flight that Kearns seriously considered turning back. Gaining altitude so that the Continental Divide could be safely crossed, the aircraft reached 18,000 feet over Monarch Pass. "At no time," he later said, "did I see a place that would have been safe in the event of a forced landing." Flying parallel to the Cochetopa Hills, the airmen crossed the Divide again at a point east of Lake San Cristobal Hills. Their hands, feet and faces numb from the cold, the fliers were forced to change course several times, due to changing wind conditions, as they circled upward to gain altitude. In the vicinity of Child's Peak, Kearns found a pass over the San Juan Mountains leading to Silverton. The absence of landmarks was a definite handicap to the airmen, but from Vallecito they continued south to Ignacio where they spotted a railroad leading to Durango and were able to get a swing on their compass. From Durango, they proceeded up the Las Animas Canyon to Silverton, where they were forced to again circle several times to gain sufficient altitude to cross the mountains south of the old silver town. Nearing Silverton shortly after noon almost five hours after takeoff Lt. Kearns and Sgt. Plank could see the cheering townspeople below. Descending to 9,800 feet, they dropped the sack full of mail, newspapers and vaccine in the town's ball park. The bundle landed undamaged in six feet of snow. The first part of their mission completed, Kearns flew south until he got a swing on his iron compass. The airmen then crossed back over the mountains to Eureka, flying over the Cochetopa National Forest, Saguache and Monte Vista. Turning northeast, Kearns and Plank flew over the San Isabel Mountains to Wetmore, eventually landing at Pueblo at 2:20 p.m., nearly six hours after their mercy mission began. After a short stop for hot coffee, lunch and refueling, the airmen once again took to the sky. Landing at Lowry Field at 4:55 p.m., Kearns and Plank were enthusiastically greeted by their fellow Guardsmen and several newspaper reporters.

In the fall of 1927, the 120th was given its first opportunity to demonstrate its value to the state as an observation squadron. The unit was asked to patrol the skies over southern Colorado during a series of bloody coal strikes. Acting under direct orders from the governor, five officers and four enlisted men were ordered to Pueblo with three O-2Cs. Making its base in Pueblo, the detail patrolled 90 miles to the south. Through the squadron's constant observance of the region, the governor and the adjutant general were kept fully informed of mass meetings, concentrations of strikers and threatened disturbances. For three weeks, the small detail flew one reconnaissance mission each hour over the southern coal fields. During one of those sorties, Cpt Neil T. McMillan made a low-level pass on strikers near Walsenburg. After returning to Pueblo, he found a number of bullet holes in his airplane. The coal field disorders later spread to northern Colorado. As a result of open hostilities and bloodshed at the Columbine Mine in November, a number of Colorado National Guard units were called to active duty. The 120th Observation Squadron, operating from old Lowry Field, again flew daily reconnaissance patrols over the new area of disturbances. On one mission Cpt McMillan and three other pilots were patrolling the area when they noticed a suspicious concentration of miners. Not too far away Army Guard

troops were putting machine guns in place and forming skirmish lines. The four pilots quickly made a bombing circle, and one by one started diving on the strikers. They had no ordnance to fire, they continued to make low passes and succeeded in dispersing the concentration. Their action averted what could have been a bloody fight. A newspaper reporter covering the story wrote with typical media color of the day: "Four roaring airplanes of the Colorado National Guard swooped and zoomed, rolled, dived, turned, circled and banked over a mass meeting of 3,200 Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) leaders and striking miners at Ludlow. Flinging themselves down from dizzy heights, straight as arrows at the massed strikers, the four daring pilots of the 120th Observation Squadron straightened up and flattened out only a few scant feet above the heads of the whirling, panic-stricken crowd, who fled to burrows in panic."

The roar of the years 1927 through 1934 witnessed many improvements in the 120th Observation Squadron. The underpowered Jennies had been replaced and the unit's PT-1s were transferred to other stations. The squadron's two Douglas O-2Cs were damaged beyond repair during cross-country flights. Replacing them were O-2Hs received from the Douglas factory at Santa Monica, CA, in early 1928. The new Douglas machines, which could fly at 140 miles per hour, were equipped with a 400 horsepower, 12-cylinder Liberty engine that was correctly designed for observation purposes. The new observation aircraft also had wheel brakes, allowing them to land on short fields. Able to be easily converted for combat, the O-2Hs cost \$18,000 each.

The O-2Hs were flown from California by Cpt Floyd N. Shumaker, Cpt Lewis W. Goss and Lt. Danny Kearns. Flying in battle formation, the pilots in their new aircraft carrying 17 brand new flying suits were met by the squadron when they landed at Lowry Field. "Wonderful ship," said Kearns as he climbed out of the cockpit after the 11-hour trip. "The most perfect performer I have ever flown." In spite of Kearns' glowing endorsement, the O-2Hs' water-cooled Liberty engines left much to be desired in altitudes where the boiling point of water was about equal to the efficient operating heat of the engines. For every 1,000 feet elevation above sea level water boils at about 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit lower temperature. At 14,000 feet, a typical altitude for crossing one of Colorado's mountain ranges, water in the Liberty engine boiled at 187 degrees.

Two O-17s, suited for high-altitude maneuverability, had been accepted by the squadron in 1930 and additional O-2Hs were acquired in 1931. In 1933 three Douglas O-38s and an O-38E were received from other units. The O-38s contained the 134 radio set, a great improvement to the squadron's communications capabilities. The airplanes were equipped for either photographic work or instrument flying and all could be adapted with aerial machine guns and bombing racks.

After commanding the 120th Observation Squadron for over three years, Maj Bruce Kistler died in August 1930 after a brief illness.

At their encampment in 1930, 120th pilots flew armed aircraft in strafing runs for the first time. Thirteen squadron pilots fired 400 rounds each at 10-foot-by-6-foot canvas-framed ground targets propped up like signboards. With propeller blades whirling in front of the gun muzzle, aircraft machine guns were timed to shoot twice for each revolution. A Denver Post newspaper reporter observed the action: "Buzzing like a big blue fly with yellow wings, a plane circles above a prairie knoll 12 miles east of Lowry Field. Suddenly it dives upon a propped up square of canvas. Jets of yellow dust spurt up around the target like splashes of muddy water."

Future flight training saw "dog fights" between squadron aircraft ... diving, climbing and banking to gain the most advantageous position for firing a machine-gun camera, mounted forward on the plane and operated by an observer from a turret in the rear cockpit. At the same 1930 encampment, pilots participated in night-flying maneuvers for the first time. By 1931, Colorado Guard planes had flown over 10,000 hours and nearly 1 million miles, a distance equivalent to about 40 times around the earth at the equator.

During the years 1932 and 1933, squadron annual field training camps were held at Fort Sill, OK, operating with other units of the 45th Division. Participation in divisional command post exercises and maneuvers, artillery surveillance and adjustment missions were the unit's principal training objectives. In May 1931, a squadron detachment with five airplanes participated in an extensive Air Corps maneuver and demonstration under the 22nd Provisional Observation Wing at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. In addition to regular Army aviation units, 99 airplanes representing 18 National Guard squadrons took part in the exercise. The Colorado detachment received very favorable comments on its high degree of efficiency.

The secretary of war, on June 17, 1932, approved a design to be painted on all airplanes of the 120th Observation Squadron as the official insignia or marking of the squadron. Given in the language of heraldry, the official description of the insignia read: "On a besant and within an annulet azure lies a mountain lion's face proper. The background and border are in the colors of the Air Corps. The mountain lion is known for his fighting qualities, keen observation and agility." The insignia was designed by 1Lt Floyd E. Welsh, 120th Observation Squadron, and was intended to exemplify the squadron's primary duty of observation as well as its fighting spirit.

In January 1934, LTC Carlos Reavis was assigned to the staff of the 45th Air Division. Succeeding him as commander of the squadron was Cpt Virgil Stone, subsequently promoted to major. The squadron's first instructor, Cpt Shumaker, had been succeeded by 1Lt L.V. Beau in 1928.

Col. Henry H. Arnold, supervisor for the western section of the airmail service in the 8th Corps area, ordered all planes in the 45th Division Air Service, including those of the 120th Observation Squadron, to be placed at the disposal of the Army. Military mechanics hurriedly worked to adapt their various pursuit planes, bombers and observation craft for mail duty. The Air Corps started flying the mail 10 days later. The planes were flown by active duty Army pilots, maintenance was performed by National Guard caretakers. Within a short period, one of Colorado's O-38E was involved in airmail service.

Squadron aircraft played an important role in the 1936 summer encampment war game called the "Battle of Cheyenne." flying over the broad mountain tops of Wyoming's Medicine Sow National Forest, in their first simulated combat test, Army warbirds scouted the heavily wooded mountain region 30 miles Nest of Cheyenne. Their objective was to help Colorado BG William Guthner's "Red" Army in land maneuvers against an opposing "Blue" Army from Wyoming. Flying Martin bombers and fast combat and attack aircraft, the Red airmen also staged air attacks against the Blue team commanded by Col. Hill of Fort Francis E. Warren. Red Army aircraft "bombed"

blacked-out Cheyenne during air raids called "one of the most thrilling and spectacular maneuvers ever attempted in any U.S Army war game." according to Denver Post staff correspondent Jack Carberry "Had the bombs been real, they would have destroyed the Wyoming state capital and the Cheyenne railroad station pouring theoretical death and destruction on the city," said Carberry. Unfortunately, as the exercise continued, the Blue team's eventual high mountain position could not be penetrated and the Colorado Red Army was defeated. A high point in the exercise was the averting of a serious railroad wreck due to the eagle-eyed observations of two Colorado National Guard pilots. On a weather scouting mission, Lt Robert Ainsworth and his observer, Lt. Harley Teall, spotted a cloudburst from the air and saw water sweep over the Colorado & Southern Railway Company tracks, destroying a bridge and right-of-way section. After coordinating with Cpt Bonfils, who was airborne in the vicinity, the pilots flew to Cheyenne, landed and telephoned railroad officials thus stopping a freight train due over the damaged railway in 15 minutes.

Squadron moves to Denver Municipal Airport During the latter part of 1937, the name Lowry Field was transferred from the National Guard squadron to the Army Air Corps Technical School, then being established at a site near East Sixth Avenue and Quebec Street in Denver. In February 1938, the 120th ceased operations at old Lowry Field and moved to new and larger quarters at the Denver Municipal Airport (now Stapleton International Airport). The only identifiable object remaining on the property of the original Lowry Field today is the flagpole that was in front of the headquarters building. A new hangar for the Guard had recently been completed at Denver Municipal as a Works Project Administration project. The structure, the second largest National Guard hangar in the United States, would be able to accommodate up to 20 observation airplanes. Approximately 5,300 square yards of concrete apron was added in front of the hangar. The new field became the stopping point for many more cross-country flights.

The move to Denver Municipal was necessary because of the assignment of the O-47. The new aircraft would not fit in the old field's hangars and the short strip was unsuitable for landings. Also, the population of Denver was slowly moving to the east, surrounding old Lowry Field an encroachment scenario that would repeat itself several more times in the history of the Colorado Air National Guard. The new hangar incorporated administrative, photographic, engineering and radio communications offices and a classroom for the 45th Division Aviation. Denver Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton and Airport Manager James Brownlow agreed to Air Corps requests for help and, pending completion of its own hangars at the new Lowry Field, the Army Air Corps Technical School used the Guard hangar to house its airplanes as well as serve as a flying training center.

During the spring of 1938, in a controversial resignation revolving around the use of state money to erect a hangar on land to which the state did not hold title, Maj Virgil Stone left the Colorado National Guard and Cpt Frederick Bonfils was appointed the new commander and promoted to major.

During the fall of their first year at Denver Municipal, the squadron suffered considerable loss of aircraft. Four of the seven remaining O-19s still carried in the 120th inventory were parked on the flight line when a disastrous fire struck. the airplanes were in the process of being surveyed

for disposition action, they had to be preflighted several times a week to insure flight readiness. Crew chiefs ran the engines up to full power, checking the magnetos and flight controls to ensure the airplanes were operational. Loyd H. Summers, Jr. started the first airplane on the line and, after warming it up, cut the engine and started to return to the hangar. When Summers was about halfway there, Joe Bahmeier, who was refueling another aircraft, yelled that dreadful word ... Fire! The first O-19 had indeed caught fire, due possibly to a hot spark from its exhaust stack. Excessive winds quickly spread the fire to the fabric-covered second airplane. In order to save a brand new O-47 parked at the end of the line, hangar chief Jack Burnell and crew chief Stan Morrison rushed a tow vehicle onto the runway to pull the O-47 out of the way. The leapfrogging fire was finally stopped, but not before all four O-19s were lost. In a matter of minutes, disposition action on many of the unit's old aircraft had rapidly taken place.

The War Department insisted the squadron clear up a lingering problem involving clear title to the municipal airport hangar. It seemed the unit had run out of money after completing the hangar and worked out an arrangement to borrow Denver city funds to install plumbing, heating and lighting. Denver agreed to maintain the hangar for three years, after which possession of the building reverted entirely to the city.

In February 1939, the 120th Observation Squadron, along with the photographic section and medical department detachment, were relieved from the 45th Division and attached to the 24th Cavalry Division as the 24th Division Aviation. The 24th included the states of Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Washington and Wyoming, with division headquarters at Topeka, Kan. At the time of its assignment to the 24th Cavalry Division, the 120th consisted of 29 officers and 100 enlisted men. Eight new O-47As, costing some \$60,000 each had been received. With the new aircraft, as well as a new photographic trailer and radio truck, the squadron was one of the most modern in the service. The squadron was subsequently relieved from the 24th Cavalry Division in 1940 and reformed as the 120th Observation Squadron, Army Air Corps.

The 120th was the first flying organization in Colorado during the years prior to World War II. Much valuable work had been accomplished. Important service to the state was provided during the Coal Strike of 1927. Mercy flights to deliver serum and emergency medical supplies were made throughout Colorado and the adjoining states, in all kinds of weather and under all conditions. One example of this type of mission occurred when Cpt Harry Wellman, MSgt. Sam McGrew and SSgt. Joe Moffitt flew an O-47 to Cortez in the late 1930s to deliver medicine to cope with a bad siege of food poisoning.

The unit was often called upon to present air demonstrations to promote an interest in both flying and establishing good airfields in towns throughout the area. The objectives met both community and Air Guard needs and the squadron became well known in the western United States. Whenever the squadron received a new type of aircraft, a few of the older planes would be sent to various colleges within the state to aid their aviation programs. The flying unit also performed liaison missions with other branches of the service and flew photographic missions for state and federal agencies. Guard planes were used as rapid conveyance for state officials, newspapermen, physicians and many others. The 120th searched for missing persons, occasionally helping state and federal police hunt down bank robbers and other fugitives from justice. The unit also flew many thousands of miles over mountain wilderness patrolling for forest fires and, of course,

assisted in airmail duties in the early 1930s.

At the time, the 120th Observation Squadron's commanding officer, Maj F.W. Bonfils, stated that calling his men away for training for a year's time would create serious problems in the unit. He went on to say, "If a national emergency existed none of these questions would arise. The squadron to a man, would be available and willing for a field service call-up." Adj. Gen. H.H. Richardson accepted, with reluctance, the resignations of Maj Bonfils, operations officer Cpt Ray Wilson, medical officer Cpt Nole Mumey and other officers and key enlisted personnel.

In August 1940, the squadron was granted a field training requirements waiver permitting them to go to DeRidder, La. near Lake Charles at less than full strength. There was some apprehension that the Guard would be mobilized immediately after the summer maneuvers and not return home. Gen. Richardson assured Guardsmen and area employees that the squadron would not be activated before November or December and would be brought to full strength by the assignment of the Colorado Army National Guard by rail and motor to Fort Sill, Okla., for a year of intensive training. The Air National Guard was destined for activation and movement to Biggs Field, Texas.

When the 120th entered active duty, Jan. 6, 1941, Maj Harrison W. Wellman, Jr. was the commanding officer, appointed in the fall of 1940. The squadron's activation strength was 19 officers and 116 enlisted men. Two squadron privates, Fred E. Harburg and Clad Christianson, were promoted to second lieutenant. At the same time, TSgt. Joe Moffitt was promoted to second lieutenant and assumed duties as an observation and engineering officer, beginning his unprecedented nine-year rise from technical sergeant to brigadier general in the Colorado Air National Guard. Moffitt received his pilot's rating in April 1941.

When activated, the unit owned nine O-47s and one BC-1A, used to transition pilots into the O-47. Two other O-47s had been transferred to the Mississippi Guard to form a Meridian unit; both planes crashed one month after the transfer. The squadron, with only seven pilots assigned, did not have enough officers with pilot ratings to fly all of its O-47 to Biggs Field. Enlisted men traveled by train to Texas; four tourist cars, three baggage cars and 10 boxcars accommodated them.

The 120th Observation Squadron's first duty station was Biggs Field, Texas, El Paso, Texas. The unit was later redesignated the 120th Reconnaissance Squadron. Its primary mission, supporting the 1st Cavalry Division, stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, consisted of adjusting artillery fire and simulating strafing and bombing attacks on troops in the field from Fort Bliss. Bombing attacks were simulated by dropping small flour sacks on field units. A secondary mission was to provide target support for anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) units stationed in the El Paso area. Missions were accomplished by towing targets behind O-47 airplanes at various altitudes, using a 3,000-foot cable. Night missions were conducted with the AAA units using glaring searchlights, creating a tremendously difficult flying task.

The 120th also used its photographic capability to take pictures of selected targets and make mosaics for use by the Army commands. Observation photos were developed and printed in the squadron's photo lab trailer. The trailer was equipped with a darkroom, folding tables for mosaic

map work, and a 1,000-watt power generator driven by gasoline motors. A separate receiving and sending radio trailer contained approximately \$50,000 worth of equipment. TSgt. R. Wilson, who operated the radio unit, installed most of the equipment. Wilson, an inventor of sorts, built a 45-foot-high antenna mast, spider-webbed at the bottom, for reception purposes. Equipped to operate in camp or in the field, the radio trailer had own telephone switchboard.

In August 1941, the squadron temporarily moved to Lake Charles, then to Baton Rouge, La., and from there to Beaumont, Texas, to participate in training maneuvers with the 2nd and 3rd Armies: more than 550,000 soldiers took part in the exercises. The area was familiar to members of the unit, since they had been there during 1940 training exercises. Upon termination of the maneuvers, the 120th returned to Biggs Field and resumed air support for the 1st Cavalry Division. In October, the loss of a 120th Observation Squadron O-47 with three men on board, 2nd Lts. Willis B. Hunt and S. Kaiser and SSgt. Richard Lauck, spurred an extensive desert search. The wreckage was finally found in the San Andres Mountains, west of Alamogordo, N.M. There were no survivors. Lts. Hunt and Kaiser were two of the many replacement personnel who came to the unit right out of cadet training. SSgt. Lauck had been mobilized with the squadron in Denver.

After Pearl Harbor, there was great concern that an enemy attack could occur from the south, precipitating another mission: patrolling the Mexican border from Douglas, Ariz., to Big Bend, Texas. The unit's O-47s would land in remote areas with no landing strips to wait and observe questionable movements. A ground outpost with aircraft standing by was also established in the Lordsburg-Demming, N.M., area to watch for movements of unscheduled or suspicious aircraft.

In 1942, under the command of Maj Ford Williams, the 120th moved for a brief period to De Ridder, La. After redesignation as a reconnaissance squadron in April 1943 and a brief return to Biggs Field, the unit was stationed in June 1943 at Abilene AAF, Texas, Esler Field, Alexandria, La., and eventually transferred to Birmingham, Ala., where it was placed on the inactive list and disbanded on Nov. 30, 1943. Personnel and equipment were absorbed in other units under the control of 3rd Air Force. Captains Schweitzer, Maessen and Rogers all commanded the 120th in the years prior to deactivation.

With Camp Hale located in a ruggedly mountainous area at an elevation of 10,500 feet, finding a landing strip to support the division in mid-winter proved to be a problem. After considerable research, the most likely landing spot was determined to be snow-covered, frozen Turquoise Lake. After considerable work to pack the snow and prepare the field, L-1A were used for the support mission due to their short-field landing and takeoff characteristics.

The first L-1A flown by Cpt Joe Moffitt landed on the lake Feb. 4, 1943. Missions were varied: one of the most challenging was an experiment to furnish communications between division units. The task was accomplished by stringing light telephone wire from a reel mounted in the rear of the L-1 aircraft, a dangerous flying operation over the mountainous terrain. The L-1 was also used to deliver and pick up messages, drop various supplies to units in the field and transport command personnel to observe unit activities. The lake was also used as a recovery point for gliders towed into the area by C-47 (a one-way trip for the gliders). Following the 10th Mountain Division exercises, the unit using its O-47 performed observation duties for Army

units stationed at Fort Hauchuca, Ariz.

Original members of the 120<sup>th</sup> called to active duty, eventually transferred and spread throughout the world, becoming part of the Army Air Forces that grew out of World War II.

After the war, a movement for creating a new aviation unit of the Colorado National Guard began in the Colorado statehouse. Interest in establishing the new air unit was endorsed by Colorado Gov. John Vivian, who emphasized his support of a strong National Guard under state control. The new aviation wing would be, in effect, a re-establishment of the old 120th Observation Squadron of the Colorado National Guard. Primarily due to Col. Stanford W. Gregory's efforts, Colorado's 120th Fighter Squadron became the first postwar National Guard aviation unit in the United States to receive formal, federal recognition, June 30, 1946, almost exactly 23 years after the squadron's first recognition.

Many of the men called to duty in 1941 with the 120th Observation Squadron returned to help in the reorganization of the Colorado Air National Guard in 1946. About 1,000 officers and men in 18 units were eventually stationed in Denver. Col. Gregory assumed command of the wing and was promoted to brigadier general. Other units of Colorado Air Guard organized in this time frame were: Headquarters, 140th Fighter Group; Headquarters, 159th Aircraft Control & Warning (AC&W) Group; Headquarters Detachment, 240th Air Service Group; Detachment "A", 240th Air Service Group; and the 120th Weather Squadron.

Headquartered under the Denver-based 59th Fighter Wing was the 140th Fighter Group, which in turn embraced Colorado's 120th Fighter Squadron. Fighter squadrons in Butte, Mont.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; and Albuquerque, NM also came under the wing's umbrella at the time. Planes and equipment were sought from government surplus. The 120th Fighter Squadron, under the command of Maj Ralph Baird, was to eventually have 25 fighter planes and 27 rated pilots. Other units to which planes and pilots were to be assigned included the 109th Radar Calibration Detachment with two A-26, the fighter group headquarters with one transport airplane, and a utility flight group with two transport aircraft.

The Colorado postwar units, just as in 1923, had very little equipment and no permanent home. Permanent caretakers (technicians) were authorized July 13, 1946, and within a short period several individuals had been employed on a temporary basis. The unit was hampered in recruiting technicians, because employment was temporary a situation lasting for three months before the caretakers' status became permanent.

The first few 1946 unit drills were held Sundays at the State Headquarters at 300 Logan St. in Denver. The former home of the 120th at Denver's Municipal Airport had been appropriated by the City of Denver, and negotiations were started to acquire space at Buckley Field.

By fall 1946, the Guard had taken over the entire east hangar at Buckley and received its first plane, a C-47. Two T-6s arrived shortly after. It was used for maintaining pilot proficiency and transitioning pilots to the P-51s yet to be assigned. The unit was gaining momentum as other aircraft flowed down the disposition pipeline. Just before Thanksgiving, three P-51s destined for the Guard were delivered at Lowry Air Force Base.

Tragedy marred the fighter squadron's first flight in the F-51. Maj Herbert G. Kolb, Air Force adviser and the only pilot current in the Mustang, was killed on takeoff November 28 while attempting to shuttle an F-51 from Lowry to Buckley.

Nearly 200 men, many officers and enlisted personnel with distinguished war experience and long records of overseas service had joined the Colorado air units. Guardsmen were obligated to attend training drills at least two hours a week for 48 weeks a year, plus a two-week summer camp. Starting pay was \$2.50 a drill.

The last Army Air Forces personnel departed Buckley in December 1946 and the Guard acquired the field on a right of entry permit dated December 20th. The new Buckley Air National Guard Base was destined to be one of the principal National Guard aviation centers in the nation. State resources were not able to support the field and the large number of tenant organizations involved. Adj. Gen., BG Irving O. Schaefer entered into negotiations with the Navy to have them assume base command with the Air National Guard as a tenant. Necessary arrangements were made and the base was transferred to the Navy Sept. 28, 1947, becoming Denver Naval Air Station.

As the Guard received its organizational equipment, personnel training became increasingly important. The U.S. active armed forces had been radically reduced and the Guard's future role as the state's militia arm and important complement to the active service began to develop. As part of a National Guard drive to raise strength throughout the United States, Colorado established an active public relations program to enhance personnel recruitment, staging air shows and open houses to attract new members to fill the ranks of the many units now assigned. As yet another recruiting incentive in the late '40s, the wing offered enlistees C-47 cross-country flights to Mount Rushmore in South Dakota's Black Hills, Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Canyon.

The Air Guard's C-47 began a series of cross country, navigational training flights in the summer of 1948. A Gooneybird, with 24 souls on board, flew to Los Angeles by way of the Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam, giving Colorado Air Guardsmen an opportunity to "train and tour" on the same trip.

The squadron embarked on a training program for both officers and enlisted men. Pilots took Link Trainer and other ground school classes, and could increase their hours in the air, check out in multi-engine aircraft and receive additional experience in military leadership. Pilots had to fly at least 100 hours annually.

At their disposal were 26 F-51, six A-26, four C-47 and six single-engine trainers. Enlisted personnel were encouraged to enter schools, thus advancing in rank and qualifying for aviation cadet school or Officers Candidate School. The Army's base pay was adopted; men were paid one day's salary according to their grade for each two-hour session they attended at Denver Naval Air Station.

After several days of intensive searching in April 1947. LTC Ralph Baird, 120th Fighter

Squadron commander, located an Air Force C-45 lost on a radio check-flight from Denver to Grand Junction. Baird was the same pilot who rode out his flaming P-51 to an emergency landing the winter before at the then Buckley ANG Base, rather than abandon it over a residential area north of Lowry Field. Baird was at 12,000 feet on a test flight when a "muffled explosion" ripped away part of his Mustang's engine cowling, touching off flames beneath the instrument panel. Rather than bail out, the lieutenant colonel swung the ship into a steep dive toward the Buckley runway, making an emergency landing. Baird's flying suit, goggles, helmet and oxygen mask protected him from the blaze when he leaped from the cockpit with the wheels still rolling. Thirty seconds later the craft was engulfed in flames from nose to tail a total loss.

In another example of the many types of missions performed. Cpt Philip Packer spotted in May 1948 the wreckage of a Civil Aeronautics Administration C-47 at the foot of 13,000-foot Navajo Peak, northwest of Nederland. The two-engine transport plane with three men aboard had been missing since January. 1Lt Bruce Cameron was co-pilot on the flight and MSgt. Lloyd Summer served as Cpt Packer's engineer.

More than 500 officers and enlisted men of the 86th Fighter Wing conducted summer camp at Denver Naval Air Station in 1948. Commander Col. Moffitt complimented the troops: I am proud of the men of the 86th Fighter Wing for their general good spirit and efficiency in training during the two-week camp period, and I feel that the people of Colorado can also feel justly proud of this important element of our state and national defense program." Adj. Gen. Irving Schaefer called the air and ground troop encampment "a howling success."

The camp ended with an air show for more than 9,000 spectators (Gov. W. Lee Knous included) at Denver Naval Air Station, held in conjunction with the Naval Air Reserve to celebrate the second anniversary of both organizations. P-51 and A-26 were flown in simulated combat, radar and aircraft maintenance equipment was demonstrated in Guard hangars. The public was invited to view displays of cutaway jet engines, Link Trainers and support aircraft.

A-26s were also used to tow targets for air-to-air gunnery missions in the late '40s and early '50s. In order to modify the A-26 for tow work, a reel was installed inside the fuselage just to the rear of the bomb-bay doors. Towing missions were usually routine affairs, but occasional inflight emergencies occurred. During 1950 field training at Camp Grayling, Mich., Cpt Alban J. Schmidt's tow-reel operator informed him of a small fire in the A-26 radio compartment. Showing strong composure, the captain asked the operator if the fire incident warranted declaring an emergency. The operator replied that it wasn't too large and he'd try to extinguish it. After landing, Schmidt went to the radio compartment to survey the damage. The fuselage was blackened from floor to ceiling over an extensive area: it was obvious the tow-reel operator must have had a harrowing experience trying to put it out. "Had I known the seriousness of the fire, I would not have wasted time requesting landing instructions, and going through the normal landing procedure of turning base and final."

On another state assistance mission after a devastating blizzard in January 1949, the Guard used their C-47s to drop hay to stranded and starving livestock throughout the Rocky Mountain region. Snow had buried roads, submerged farm buildings and farmhouses, and locked in rural families who needed fuel, medical care and livestock feed.

Colorado's snowstorms created the need for a Disaster Relief Office in the Denver Armory. Headed by Col. Joe Moffitt, 86th Fighter Wing commander, the office was manned on a 24-hour basis. Newspaper and radio broadcasts resulted in emergency calls being channeled through the Disaster Relief Office; relief missions were promptly dispatched. Colorado Air Guard F-51s and A-26s flew 10 reconnaissance missions during the emergency. C-47s flew 17 hay-lift missions and dropped tons of hay, saving thousands of cattle and wild animals.

Several serious aircraft accidents claimed, or nearly claimed, the lives of Air Guard pilots in 1949. Encountering fog and icing conditions in their F-51s, 1Lt Jay A. Sheppard and 2Lt Harry Wilkens, both 24, became separated from two other planes during a February navigational flight, crashed and were killed about a mile and a half from each other atop a plateau in the rugged Twin Buttes Country near Kit Carson in southeastern Colorado. Both 120th Fighter Squadron pilots were World War II veterans. A month later, 2Lt Keith McGinnis parachuted to safety from 2,000 feet above the base when his Mustang collided at 300 mph with another F-51 flown by Cpt Harold H. Dunning. McGinnis' aircraft spiraled down on fire and crashed one quarter of a mile west of the Buckley Veterans Village, its four-bladed propeller falling through an unoccupied building. Dunning was able to land his aircraft safely. The planes were practicing close maneuvers on a routine flight when the accident occurred. Both pilots were unharmed and there were fortunately no injuries to personnel at the field. In August, 2Lt Elmer A. Splittstoesser, 25, was killed when his F-51 crashed and exploded about three miles northwest of Parker. According to witnesses, the plane failed to come out of a loop and plunged to the ground, exploding on contact with the lieutenant on board. Splittstoesser, a United Airlines flight engineer, was on a regular training mission. Tragedy struck once again in November, claiming another young fighter pilot. 1Lt Charles Callahan, 25, was on a solo acrobatic training mission. He was killed instantly when his Mustang tore apart in a high-speed dive and crashed into a pasture near the Riverside Reservoir. The plane's broken wing was found three-fourths of a mile from the main wreckage, indicating it came off as Callahan tried to pull out of the dive.

140th Fighter Wing activated Nov 1, 1950. Attached to the 120th Fighter Squadron in Colorado was a weather station unit and a utility flight with A-26s and C-47 for cargo and emergency work.

By the end of 1949, the Colorado Air Guard had an aircraft inventory of 21 F-51s, four A-26s, four C-47s and two AT-6s.

Most of Colorado's 120th Fighter Squadron pilots were assigned to Korea, where their flying skills were desperately needed.

Almost 400 wing members participated in an atomic energy demonstration called Tumbler Snapper Shot Number III in April 1952 living in tents at Camp Desert Rock, Nev. The exercise conducted at Yucca Flats -- marked the first time that Air Force or Air National Guard personnel had been employed in a tactical situation involving an atomic energy demonstration. April 1952. Approximately 400 members of the Colorado ANG's 120th Fighter Squadron participated as human guinea pigs in an atomic bomb test, "Tumbler Snapper Shot III," at Yucca Flats, Nevada while on temporary duty from Clovis AFB, New Mexico.

In the summer of 1953, the Colorado ANG received their first jet aircraft, the F-80A. Pilot transition to the aircraft was made in time to enter the ANG Gunnery Meet at Boise, Idaho, that year. Colorado's aerial gunnery team did not place, they gained valuable experience that would be used the following year.

On July 1, 1955, the 140th Fighter-Bomber Wing was redesignated the 140th Fighter Interceptor Wing (FIW). Its combat arm was redesignated at the 120th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS). the unit's mission was changed from tactical to air defense, there were no startling changes in the new manning document. Air-to-ground firing was eliminated and training efforts concentrated on air-to-air combat.

During this time, the Air Guard was allocated necessary funds for a new hangar. Before construction could begin, the old wooden hangar had to be completely razed.

The 140th had converted to a fighter interceptor wing in July 1955 with little change in the organizational structure. July 1, 1957, the wing was reorganized and redesignated the 140th Air Defense Wing (ADW).

The change reduced the number of authorized personnel and, their function did not change, all units became squadrons assigned to the 140th Fighter Group. The new organizations included: Headquarters, 140th ADW; Headquarters, 140th Fighter Group (AD); 140th Air Base Squadron; 140th Materiel Squadron, 140th USAF Dispensary; and the 120th FIS.

Before a year had elapsed, an additional reorganization of maintenance responsibilities took place. In April 1958, the materiel squadron was reorganized and redesignated the 140th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. All aircraft maintenance activities in the 120th were transferred to the new organization, leaving the 120th with an authorized strength of 35 officers and 19 airmen.

The Colorado Air Guard began the transition from F-80s to the F-86D in 1957. Pilots and maintenance personnel were trained by an F-86D mobile detachment and were ready for the F-86s when they arrived; the airplane required many more hours of maintenance duty than the wing's earlier aircraft.

By the end of 1958's field training at Casper, all but two squadron pilots had finished their F-86D transition phase. There was still much to be accomplished before the pilots could be considered combat ready; radar trail, day and night profiles, night intercepts, airborne intercepts, and, of course, firing live rockets at a tow target all required familiarization. All aspects of training, except rocket firing, had been completed by the time field training began the following year. The necessary firing training was subsequently accomplished during the second week of 1959's summer camp. With pilots fully qualified and combat ready, the Colorado ANG was placed on alert status Jan. 1, 1959.

By the following year, pilots and aircraft in the 120th were standing 14-hour runway alerts, seven days a week.

Progress sometimes comes at a high price. LTC Coomer came close to paying that price in June 1961, as the first COANG pilot to crash in the newly acquired F-100. The 120th TFS commander was taking off on Buckley's north-south runway when his Super Sabre suffered an afterburner blowout. The plane hit the ground at approximately 180 mph, knocking off its landing gear. His aircraft crashed through two fences and careened off three small knolls before coming to a flaming halt two miles from the field. A veteran of 19 years flying, Coomer considered himself "just lucky."

Recalled to active duty Oct. 1, 1961, for the Berlin Crisis, the 120th TFS, with 35 officers and 65 enlisted, was augmented by 27 officers and 405 enlisted personnel from wing resources. The 120th had been officially assigned to the 113th TFW, District of Columbia ANG, Andrews AFB, Md., when alerted two months prior.

Aircrew training was intensified. For three weeks, tactical pilots fired air-to-ground gunnery at Fort Carson on a daily basis. Cpt Jack Wilhite, range officer, qualified in his first mission with a 37 percent accuracy rate. After more practice and training, he and the other pilots were firing upwards of 70 percent. While standing by as a Ready Reserve unit under TAC's 12th Air Force, a depleted 140th TFW passed its first Operational Readiness Inspection flying the F-100.

LTC Barnwell, assumed command of the augmented squadron in place of the injured Coomer. Many of the ANG units recalled for the crisis were deployed overseas or to the zone of interior bases. The 120th spent the remaining 10 months of activation at home base, with the exception of about 90 days spent at George AFB, CA, while Buckley's runways were being repaired.

At the time, there were 587 personnel on standby reserve to further augment those already on active duty should the need arise. The maintenance of base utilities and roads, as well as the servicing of all transient military air traffic, was conducted by 176 air service employees.

Members of the 120th TFS continued honing flying skills and combat capabilities in a variety of exercises conducted throughout their activation (Oct. 1, 1961-Aug. 24, 1962). Exercises included: firepower demonstrations at Fort Sill, Okla.; "Falcon 62,- George AFB, CA; "Bristle Cone," Camp Irwin, CA; "Clear Lake," Brookley AFB, Ala.; and "Swift Strike II" in the Carolinas.

The 120th TFS was officially released from active service Aug. 24, 1962. There was no lack of fanfare as 18 F-100s flew the full length of Colfax Avenue in diamond formation as a salute to the Guardsmen unloading from five C-130 transports at Buckley.

The Volk Field, Wis., population was increased by approximately 1,000 from June 15-29, 1963, as ANG units from Colorado, Iowa, Indiana and Alabama took part in summer field training there for the first time. Colorado's 140th and Sioux City, Iowa's 185th TFG flew a combined 40 sorties a day for the two week period.

The 140th TFW prepared to deploy to Puerto Rico Nov. 29 to Dec 2, 1963, marking the first Air National Guard deployment outside the continental U.S. Refueled by ANG KC-97s, the F-100s

flew nonstop to Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station. Support personnel arrived by C-97. Coloradans participated in air- to-air target practice and worked with a photo-reconnaissance unit from the Mississippi Air Guard for tactical experience.

Ready Go," in some aspects, was vastly different than other deployments. Its length and complexity elevated it to a more sophisticated level. Pilots sat hunched in their cockpits for nearly 10 hours straight, flying a zigzag route northward to Newfoundland, southeasterly to the Azores, east to Spain, north again to England, then east once more into Hahn and Ramstein Air Bases in Germany some 4,600 air miles from their starting point on the East Coast. Along that difficult route, they rendezvoused three times with prepositioned Air Guard tankers. While no pilot had to go to an abort base due to inability to refuel enroute, bad weather over most of Germany forced some of the planes to set down in England. When the exhausting flight finally ended in Germany, fresh pilots from New York, Iowa and Missouri units, as well as other Colorado people, were waiting to step into the cockpits and fly practice missions under Army and Air Force commanders. We flew an ocean non-stop, and made ourselves immediately ready with no lost motion to fly combat missions," said the leader of the Atlantic crossing, BG Willard W. Millikan. The D. Air Guard general also said the trip symbolized the final demise of the once-prevalent belief that part-time fliers would have trouble mastering highly sophisticated weapons systems and the high-pressure time requirements of a first-line role in the era's fast-reaction Air Force.

"Operation Ready Go" was followed by another challenging deployment, dubbed "Diamond Lil," involving non-stop flying from a staging area at McChord AFB, Wash., to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, for a 15-day period (Sept. 27 to Oct. 11). Once in Alaska, the wing's objective was to supplement the Alaskan Air Command with a tactical fighter unit in the joint theater of operations. In addition to "Diamond Lil," the 16-plane strike force, commanded by LTC Barnwell, provided Army field maneuvers "Denali Eagle I and II" with close ground support, interdiction, counter-air insurgency and reconnaissance. The exercise and ensuing maneuvers marked the first time an ANG wing had participated in an operation of this magnitude. By the time the last COANG plane had returned to its home base, nearly 300 Guardsmen had participated in the deployment.

Disaster struck Colorado Wednesday, June 16, 1965, as flood waters raged through metropolitan Denver and the eastern plains of the state. About 225 Air National Guardsmen joined many Army Guard units and civil authorities in disaster assistance duties. Initial response troops were sent to Englewood and Littleton to direct traffic away from flooding Plum Creek and the Platte River. Working throughout the night, Guardsmen were relieved by a second shift whose primary job was patrolling the disaster areas to prevent looting. Assistance operations were controlled out of Colorado National Guard Headquarters, 300 Logan St., under the direction of the adjutant general. Providing Moffitt with yet another hat to wear, the state had selected him to head the newly created post of State Natural Disaster Coordinator.

The possibility of Air Guard involvement in Vietnam loomed on the horizon as 1965 came to an end. In a December editorial, Denver Post staff writer Dan Partner (a great friend of the 140th TFW who accompanied the unit to Southeast Asia) wrote about numerous DoD studies on manpower and weapon requirements in Vietnam. According to Partner at the time, "These

studies concern the possible need for more F-100 jet fighters in Southeast Asia as the tempo of the war increases and new jet landing strips become available."

In the spring of 1966, the Colorado ANG took delivery of a C-54, its first four-engine aircraft. The military equivalent of a DC-4, the aircraft was transferred to Buckley from Kelly AFB, Texas. The new airplane replaced a COANG C-47 support aircraft standby, dubiously dubbed Flintstone I. "Ole 161" (short for C47 42-093161) provided 18 years faithful service to the unithauling personnel and cargo at a "comfortable" speed of about 150 mph. The aged Gooneybird was transferred to Florida with Moffitt at the controls on the final flight. Official records are sketchy, but SMSgt. Howard Belles learned that by the time the old bird lifted off Buckley's runway for the last time, she had flown about 1.5 million miles, a distance equal to nearly 60 trips around the world.

About this same time, Colorado F-100Cs underwent depot modifications. As part of the program, the fighters were camouflaged with subdued markings, adding further "fuel to the fire" about their potential use in Southeast Asia.

Cherry and his deputy, LTC Jankovsky, led the two-week, 117-person, 7,000-mile deployment to Incirlik. Colorado pilots flew 12 F-100s non-stop from Loring AFB, Maine, to Torrejon AB, Spain. "We gained a new respect for Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight," Maj Dodd said, as he pulled his travel-wearied body out of the cockpit. The unit performed in almost perfect manner and was lauded by all levels of command.

In 1967, a night range was set up at Fort Carson and with the unit's C-47 rigged for flare drops, every pilot was qualified combat ready in night deliveries. The 120th was selected to support a NATO exercise, "Deep Furrow," in Incirlik, Turkey, for 15 days in October 1967, just eight months prior to the unit's deployment to Vietnam. The Colorado ANG's only remaining C-47, rigged for flare drops, with accompanying flights of four F-100s, participated in "Operation Night Owl" at Fort Carson during 1967's summer field training. At the Goon's controls for the first mission was Col. Philip W. Packer. The flare-launching crew consisted of MSgt. Robert Huffman, TSgt. Marvin Schissler, TSgt. Ray Zorens, TSgt. Michael Valient and Sgt. Amando Sanchez. All combat-ready pilots of the 140th received the indoctrination of at least one night weapons delivery mission. The same scenario was repeated at Fort Hood, Texas, later in the year, when TAC over extended in Vietnam, asked the 140th to provide live-fire night missions for the Army. LTC Cherry, who had led the first night local training flight, was the mission commander along with his deputy, Maj Dale Dodd.

In October, "Deep Furrow '67" marked the wing's first-of- several deployments to Turkey. The NATO exercise was comprised of elements from the Turkish Army and Air Force, the U.S. Army in Europe, the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet, and several TAC stateside units. It was the first time Air Guard fighters, participating in a NATO exercise, had used KC-135s to refuel. The 140th had become tanker qualified due to the foresight of Col. Dale Sweat, commander of the 832nd Air Division, Cannon AFB, N.M.

On Jan. 26, 1968 (a Thursday morning, 9:45 a.m. Denver time), the world learned of the activation of "certain USAF Reserve, ANG and Naval Air Reserve units." A few moments later,

national wire services were carrying information that the 140th TFW was included in President Johnson's call-up.

At 11 a.m., Wing Commander, BG Williams received official confirmation that the 140th was being activated, effective Jan. 26, in support of USAF requirements. Williams immediately called a news conference to confirm the fact to Colorado Air Guardsmen and the public. For some Guardsmen, this was their fourth call to active duty. The call-up was in response to the USS Pueblo's capture by North Koreans earlier in the month. The president activated 14,600 Air Guardsmen and Navy Reservists to back up U.S. demands for the return of the Pueblo and its 83 men. The activation involved 900 personnel; 123 officers, 777 airmen and included nine Colorado ANG units: Headquarters, 140th TFW; Headquarters, 140th TFG; 120th TFS; 140th CSS; 140th Supply Squadron; 140th CAMS; 140th Tao. Hospital; 140th Communications Flight; and the 120th Weather Flight. LTC Cherry took command of the 120th TFS and LTC Jankovsky was selected as operations officer.

During the period from recall to active duty to the actual deployment, the organization was faced with many USAF requirements. New identification cards had to be obtained for all personnel and their dependents. The processing was accomplished rapidly; CMSgt. Richard Burch and his people set up extra shifts and an around-the-clock operation. Additionally, all aircrews had to fill certain "squares," such as sea survival school and full-scale weapons delivery training at Cannon AFB, N.M. Command structure for the weapons training was furnished by the 140th TFW since all four states Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas and Iowa were involved.

The wing had, for all practical purposes, 100 percent manning and, with few exceptions, 100 percent materiel, making it a true C-1 combat-ready organization. Colorado had an overage in pilot strength: there were 47 pilots to choose from to fill the 26 slots involved in a squadron-strength combat deployment. Cherry selected only those who were certified flight leaders and, insofar as possible, those with prior combat experience.

The 120th soon learned about TAC personnel systems and procedures. A "nameless computer" performed manning selections, thus denying the commander and chief of maintenance the capability to deploy the optimum team of maintenance and weapons personnel. Some reclamations were successful, but still, some highly qualified individuals had to be left behind.

Many officers and airmen went on to fulfill significant roles in the war effort outside of Vietnam; they were deployed, either individually or in small groups, to Japan, South Korea, Greenland and to numerous CONUS bases. Before returning to civilian status, Colorado Air Guardsmen saw duty at 49 U.S. and 11 overseas bases, with some 140 deploying on July 22, 1968, to positions throughout South Korea. Most non-Vietnam-bound Guardsmen were deployed as individual replacements for USAF personnel, with many finding themselves in key unit slots by virtue of their experience and qualifications.

After the 120th TFS (sent to Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam), the next largest intact group of Colorado Air Guardsmen to be activated was the 140th TFW Headquarters, along with personnel from many of its subordinate units. Assigned to the 832nd Air Division at Cannon AFB, N.M., effective May 20, 1968, the 140th TFW's mission was to establish an organization for training

pilots transitioning to air liaison and forward air controller (FAC) duties.

Under the command of Col. Curtis J. Irwin of the 174th Tactical Fighter Group, Syracuse, N.Y., the newly formed wing at Cannon became the headquarters unit for the 174th, the 175th TFG of Baltimore, Md., the 4429th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), and the 4429th Field Maintenance Squadron.

The 174th and the 175th were equipped with the F-86H; the 4429th COTS, equipped with AT-33 aircraft for FAC training, was formed with Guardsmen from Colorado, New York and Maryland, supplemented with USAF personnel. With the deactivation of Air Guardsmen the following year, Cannon AFB training continued with an expanded 4429th CCTS that transitioned from the program created by the 140th TFW. unheralded by comparison to Colorado's fighter squadron heroics in Vietnam, the many important missions fulfilled by other Colorado Air Guardsmen should be remembered as well.

120th TFS shipping orders for Phan Rang AB arrived April 22, 1968, and a small advance party departed April 27. Three days later, 20 squadron F-100s departed for Hickam AFB. May 1, they flew to Guam and the final leg of the 8,416 nautical-mile flight was completed the following day. The unit officially arrived at Phan Rang on May 3, since the international date line had been crossed. During the 19 hours, 35 minutes flight time, there were no problems with tactical aircraft, airlift or tankers. The entire squadron arrived exactly on time . . . a tribute to the Colorado maintenance men providing enroute support at each base.

The first ground attack on Phan Rang occurred the night of the Colorado unit's arrival in Vietnam and the unit faced ground fire many times during their tour of duty. During redeployment one year later, the base was attacked several times; pilots launched for home at night during a "Red Alert."

Of 376 Colorado personnel at Phan Rang, only 152 were allowed in the fighter squadron; the remainder were assigned throughout the 35th TFW headquartered there. All Colorado Guardsmen attended 120th TFS meetings, the maintenance hangar becoming Colorado's Phan Rang "focal point" throughout the tour. The squadron joined the 352nd TFS, 614th TFS and the 615th TFS, plus the 85th Tactical Bombardment Squadron and the Royal Australian Air Force #2 Squadron, as part of the 35th TFW.

More training ensued. While LTC Marooney and his men were readying aircraft, administrative and life-support personnel were establishing an operations section. Pilots trained intensively in theater indoctrination, jungle survival, rules of engagement and other administrative and medical requirements. Living accommodations were basic, at best, giving everyone a taste of what 1940s-era troops experienced. Months passed before pilots and support personnel had anything close to satisfactory living conditions.

Combat operations began on May 8. Cherry and Maj France flew the first sortie by the first ANG squadron ever committed to combat as a unit. The first missions during the end of the "Tet" offensive were so successful that they made the 7th Air Force's daily news broadcast. By June 1, all pilots were certified as qualified, combat-flight leaders. Maintenance and weapons sections

gave Phan Rang active duty squadrons some excellent lessons in low aircraft-abort and high munitions-reliability rates.

Not all of the men returned home. On March 28, 1969, Seiler was killed after being hit by enemy ground fire during an F-100 strafing mission. A few days later, April 3, Cpt Perry Jefferson failed to return from an intelligence-gathering flight in a light observation plane. Ironically, both men were lost within three weeks of the unit's departure date for Colorado. The F-100 static display at Buckley ANG Base's main gate is dedicated in their memory.

By the time the Colorado Guard prepared to depart Phan Rang, most of the 35th TFW key supervisory positions were held by unit personnel, another tribute to Guard capabilities. On April 11, 1969, most squadron personnel returned home to a huge welcoming party at Buckley ANG Base.

Four days later, the squadron's F-100 touched down, after retracing the deployment route, again taking three days to make the flight. Fate and the peculiarities of Colorado weather dulled the luster of their welcome. The F-100s diverted to Peterson AFB due to severe weather at Buckley. The weary pilots had to be bused, several hours later, to their waiting families and friends.

*The 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron, an F-100C fighter squadron based at Buckley ANG Base, Colorado, was the first ANG unit called to active duty in January, 1968.” The “Colorado Cougars” were well prepared, as they had gained valuable experience with regular Air Force units by participating in Exercise Deep Furrow. Deep Furrow was a six-day North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) exercise in Turkey in October, 1967, in which twelve Colorado ANG F-100 aircraft and 125 men participated. Deep Furrow was the first such NATO exercise to utilize an Air National Guard unit.*

*At this time, the 120th was well known for its readiness and capabilities. In November, 1967, the 120th was awarded the “Most Operational Readiness Plaque” by the Air National Guard Association. Additionally, in February, 1968, the Commander of Tactical Air Command (TAC) presented the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA) to the parent organization of the 120th TFS, the 140th TFG, for “meritorious service as an increased readiness unit.” To many, it was no surprise that the 120th TFS would be the first ANG fighter unit to be called to Vietnam.*

*The 120th TFS began its deployment to Vietnam, from Buckley ANG base, on April 28th, 1968. Led by squadron commander Robert C. Cherry, twenty F-100Cs arrived at Phan Rang AB, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) on May 3rd, with the remainder of the support personnel and material following close behind. The aircraft and personnel were then assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW), which included three active duty (AD) F-100D/F fighter squadrons, one B-57 tactical bomber squadron, and various other operational and support units. In all, 31 officers and 365 enlisted men were involved in the deployment. Of this total, approximately 29 officers and 125 enlisted men remained with the squadron. The others augmented various units within the 35th TFW.*

*The pilots began orientation flights on May 8th and all of the aircrews were checked out and*

*ready to fly combat missions within two weeks. As an indicator of their readiness, the 120th deployed with 100 percent of its unit operationally ready and with 100 percent of the pilots flight leader qualified. Additionally, 33 percent of the pilots were qualified as instructors. The pilots of the 120th integrated with host active duty fighter Wing operations immediately and by the end of June already had over 70 confirmed enemies Killed by Air and over 900 bunkers and 40 sampans destroyed. As remarked by a 120th flight commander a short time later, "...it's not bad for a bunch of civilians, but you ain't seen nothing yet!"*

*Normally, the 120th TFS was tasked with flying missions such as Direct Air Support, Close Air Support (CAS), Trail Dust (air cover for defoliation missions), Bookie Escort (air cover for transport aircraft on re-supply missions), Landing Zone preparation (suppression of enemy during landing of ground troops), and Landing Zone construction (blowing down trees for helicopter landings). Additionally, the 120th was tasked with providing aircraft and pilots to sit 24 hour alert, primarily to assist Troops-in-Contact (TIC) situations.*

*The 120th TFS's pilots faced danger on a daily basis. in some of the first months of the deployment twenty 120th TFS aircraft received battle damage. For example, on December 29th, 1968, the unit lost an F-100C to hostile ground fire. The pilot, Captain Joe O'Neill, ejected safely and was recovered unhurt by an Army helicopter of the 64th Advanced Team, MACV. Subsequently, other such encounters followed, not all of them ending happily.*

*On 27 March, 1969, the 120th TFS lost an F-100C while on a strafing pass in the vicinity of Song Be Mountain. The aircraft was on its second strafing pass when it was hit by enemy ground fire, causing a premature napalm bomb explosion. The pilot, Major Clyde Seiler, was killed. Considering that the 120th TFS was within weeks of returning home at that time, the unit's only pilot loss was especially heartbreaking.*

*Some of the first "awards" given to the 120th TFS were Purple Hearts awarded to 120th TFS enlisted members for wounds sustained in mortar attacks on the base. during the 120th's tour at Phan Rang the enemy subjected the base to 15 separate attacks, with close to 400 rounds of enemy mortars and rockets impacting the base. As one 120th report noted, "There are no rear echelons in this war."*

*The 120<sup>th</sup> maintained an Operational Rate of over 86 percent (USAF standard was 71 percent) and an abort rate of 0.5 percent (7th AF standard was 3 percent). Even more, the 120th set the wing record of seven days without a dud weapon or an unfulfilled sortie request from the wing.*

*The men of the Colorado ANG had truly racked up an outstanding list of accomplishments and awards before their return home in April, 1969. The 120th was credited with over 750 confirmed KBAs, and 4500 bunkers and 350 sampans destroyed. The men of the 120th TFS in Vietnam, then numbering 317 enlisted men and 26 officers, returned home in April of 1969 to exultant family members and a proud state.*

Just prior to noon, April 30, 1969, Colorado Air National Guardsmen, called to active duty 15 months before, were demobilized and returned to the governor's command authority Said Cherry,

The year had proven, once again, that the citizen-airman can match and even beat the regulars at their own game. The dedication, expertise, esprit de corps and 'one for-all, all-for-one attitude,' so prevalent in a peacetime environment, really came to the forefront during the war."

Numbers can never completely tell a story; but, a few graphically show Colorado Guardsmen's accomplishments: The 120th flew more than 10,000 hours and 6,127 sorties, of which 5,905 were combat missions. They dropped 5.9 million pounds of 500-pound bombs, 8.2 million pounds of 750-pound bombs, 5.5 million pounds of napalm and fired almost 1.8 million rounds of 20mm cannon. Their accident rate was zero; aircraft operational ready rate 86.9 percent (USAF standard = 71 percent); abort rate 0.5 percent (7th AF standard = 3 percent); weapons release rate 99.7 percent; and weapons reliability rate 98.9 percent.

Two other personnel changes occurred a month later. Maj France took charge of the 120th TFS

As with every previous deactivation and subsequent loss of personnel, the COANG turned its attention to rebuilding the fighter wing. Also, a new tactical control group was established at Buckley in late 1971.

Maj Bruce Hansen and Cpt Gerald Bozarth parachuted to safety after their F-100s collided high over range land south of Pueblo in July 1971. Three days earlier, Cpt John Morris' F-100 flamed out as he approached a Buckley landing. He stayed with the aircraft long enough to head for an open area, then bailed out at an altitude of about 500 feet. His aircraft crashed into a dry creek bed, burst into flames, then skidded into an auto salvage yard in Aurora

Bailing out at 17,000 feet, Lt. John Pratt escaped serious injury when his crippled F-100 plunged into a cornfield north of Strasburg in Adams County in November 1972. In January 1973, LTC William Neuens parachuted to safety from 3,000 feet as his F-100 crashed and burned in pastureland five miles south of Watkins.

The nationwide energy crisis hit very hard during the fall and winter of 1973. All COANG fighters were grounded for two months in late December as an emergency conservation measure; other aircraft were restricted to mission-essential flights.

In late September 1973, the Colorado Air Guard's Maj Perry Jefferson was finally declared killed in action . . . nearly four years after he failed to return to Phan Rang AB from an intelligence mission. Also in September, Joint Training Exercise "Boldfire" was conducted at Fort Carson with 18 wing F-100s flying 105 support sorties. F-100 pilots attacked aggressor forces from all sides with bombs, rockets and napalm, and went through simulated "strafing" of ground troops.

The unit's C-54G (transferred out in April 1973) was replaced in September with a C-131B. After extensive modification, the C-131 converted to the dual capability of passenger service and cargo airlift.

During January, a massive training program began for all support and aircrew personnel who could not depart Buckley for formal USAF schools. Several pilots were able to attend the A-7 conversion course at Myrtle Beach AFB, while others obtained a short transition course at either

Myrtle Beach or England AFB. The first A-7 had arrived in December for ground crew training, another in January for load team training and the remaining 18 in March and April. During the upheaval of conversion, the F-100 program continued as before, but with fewer pilots. Once a pilot started flying the A-7, he did not fly the F-100 again. By mid-1974, only three F-100F (two-seat) aircraft remained.

A year later, the 140th TFW became the first ANG A-7 unit to attain full combat-ready status. The control group and fighter wing participated in many exercises and deployments during the decade, increasing their viability as members of the total force.

Re-enlistments in the Air Guard dropped off following the unit's return from its South Vietnam active duty tour. 140th TFW Commander BG Walt Williams recalled the late 1950s as he looked toward rebuilding the unit: "We had a serious recruiting problem then there was an anti-military environment that made it difficult to get good men into the organization. There's a similar environment today and the prospect of a zero draft presents a real challenge for us to keep fully manned and retain a high readiness level." Williams began an intensive recruitment program, aimed primarily at men with prior armed forces service. Said Williams about the prospect of a no-draft, all-volunteer environment: "It presents a challenge to us to provide better management, better training and more interesting and rewarding duty for our people."

Then, just a few weeks after the official 1974 ceremony welcoming the new A-7 aircraft to the squadron's inventory, Cpt Albert T. Sage was killed in a Corsair crash a few miles south of Pueblo. In a midair collision in late 1975, A-7s flown by Capt. Charles Betts and Kirk "K.B." Clark collided northeast of Elizabeth. Neither pilot was injured, both were transported by Army helicopters to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center for examination. The A-7s, which were practicing night landings, were the second and third Corsairs lost by the COANG after conversion. In December 1976, LTC Robert Beabout experienced trouble over Sharon Springs, Kan., set his A-7 on a near vertical course toward open space and ejected at about 19,000 feet near Limon, CO He was uninjured.

In August 1975, a new ANG A-7D simulator officially became COANG property. Still used by the Colorado Air Guard, the highly sophisticated training device manufactured by McDonnell Douglas Corp. consists of a cockpit which sits atop a motion base. Both are connected to a Datacraft computer and an instructor/operator console. The simulator allows pilots to be trained in the use of all controls and indicators inside an A-7D, saving lives and defense dollars in the process.

In response to Colorado's Big Thompson flood on July 31, 1976, the COANG joined the Army National Guard to provide assistance. In five days, Air Guard fuel trucks provided more than 11,600 gallons of fuel for Army helicopters. In addition, contributions were collected to assist Guardsmen caught in the canyon disaster and to contribute to the general relief fund which was established in the flood's wake.

In their first A-7D overseas deployment, the 140th deployed for 23 days to Gilze-Rijen Air Base, Netherlands, in September 1977 to participate in "Coronet Ante." The exercise tasked the unit to fly close air support, interdiction and counter-air missions in support of NATO Reforger exercise

"Cold Fire." Eighteen A-7D Corsairs, led by BG John L. France, landed at Holland's Gilze-Rijen Air Base to form a composite wing with the 316th Squadron of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. Colorado's 120th TFW, commanded by LTC Robert A. Flick, and New Mexico's 188th TFS, led by LTC James W. Van Scyoc, each provided nine Corsairs for the exercise. Logistical problems were extensive and complex. With six air refuelings, they had flown non-stop from Rickenbacker AFB, Ohio, to become the first U.S. tactical aircraft deployed to the Netherlands for a NATO exercise. They were met by 300 support people flown in on MAC C-141s. Twelve hours after landing, the wing was flying check-out sorties. A humorous headline in one civilian publication after the deployment read, "France takes Holland."

Though both units had distinguished active-duty records, neither had "interfaced" with a NATO tactical organization to form a single operating force. Complicating the task were the facts that the Dutch and Americans flew different aircraft and were accustomed to dissimilar flying terrains. "Europe is small to us 'lots-of-space' Westerners," said participant LTC Jack Wilhite, "At 600 mph in NATO territory, the A-7D chews up land- space fast." Equipment differences extended to such areas as fuel and ordnance fittings.

The Dutch and Americans hit it off from the start. Two explanations stand out: Nearly all the Dutch personnel spoke English and everyone from both nations gave the exercise "his best shot." The Dutch, for example, realizing their typical breakfast of cheese and blood sausage wouldn't set the American troops up too nicely for a hard day, sent cooks to a U.S. NATO installation, Soesterberg Air Base near Utrecht, Holland, for on-the-job training in cooking ham and eggs. Before the first week was over, more than 60 Dutch families invited Guardsmen to their homes ... some even lent the Americans their bicycles.

The good relationship between the Dutch and Americans helped make the military exercises smooth and productive. During the "Cold Fire" part of Reforger, pilots flew ground- support missions everywhere from Denmark to the French border, usually in Western Germany or Holland. When Cold Fire ended, Guard pilots mounted "Double-Dutch," an exercise using gunnery targets and bombing ranges on the coast in competition with RCAF pilots from Gilze-Rijen flying Northrup NF-5s. The Guardsmen did so much damage to ground targets that exercise planners and Dutch observers were left stunned. The American Corsairs carried so much ordnance that the Dutch had to ask them to use an alternate range: "You're ruining our targets!" was the plea. When it was all over, the American squadrons had flown 368 sorties 853 hours spread over 15 flying days, 30 percent more than planned. The in-commission rate for the 18 American aircraft was 95.8 percent for the entire operation. They had flown air-to-air and counter-air missions against F-5 Mirages and F-104 among other aircraft. Guard pilots credited superior maintenance by their technicians, the performance of the A-7Ds, and the excellent fall weather in Europe as major factors in the success of the NATO exercises. At the time of the A-7 deployment, more than 30 Air Guard pilots from five states also flew to Germany in "Operation Coronet Flush," also part of the Reforger exercise. Guardsmen from Colorado, Georgia, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming joined forces as part of the 140th Communications Flight (Support), commanded by LTC William Morris. The 140th TFW received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its highly successful 1977 deployment to Gilze-Rijen Air Base, Holland.

Another A-7D was lost when it crashed on a training mission in May 1978 four miles west of Kit Carson. The pilot, Maj Joseph B. Mandel, was killed.

Two A-7Ds and their pilots were lost when they crashed in 1979. Cpt Dennis E. Klock was killed in February when his A-7D crashed in a field southwest of Cheyenne Wells in eastern Colorado. Cpt Harold M. Cochran was killed two months later when his aircraft crashed while practicing bombing and strafing runs on the Fort Carson range south of Colorado Springs.

In December, the Air Guard began a month-long rotation to Howard AFB, Panama, taking two contingents in support of exercise "Coronet Cove." The exercise was designed for the rotational deployment and redeployment of A-7D aircraft in support of USAF Southern Command commitments. The third Air Guard unit to handle the Latin American mission, the wing participated in training exercises with the Army's 193rd Infantry Brigade, providing close-air support and air-to-ground gunnery missions. It was not mission leader Gen. France's first visit to Panama; the general had flown with the Minute Men over what was then the Canal Zone almost 20 years before.

The exercise proved, once again, that the Air Guard does, in fact, provide an invaluable reserve to the Air Force. The Canal Area commitment continues through the present as a regular wing deployment of four A-7Ds and 104 personnel. A total of 14 ANG A-7 units take one month each to provide 365-days-a-year protection, as called for under the Panama Canal Treaties of 1977.

In September 1979, the unit deployed to Merzifon Air Base in central Turkey to support the NATO exercise "Display Determination." The entire squadron of 24 A-7s deployed for a period of 30 days to a bare base in which only a runway and water supply was provided. LTC John "J.B." Stone, a Vietnam F-4 pilot and "Operations Bolo" participant, took command of the 120th TFS in 1979. The wing deployed 485 people and 18 A-7Ds to Merzifon, Turkey, in September and October of that year to participate in NATO exercise "Display Determination." Part of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe "Autumn Forge" series of exercises, support troops traveled by C-141 to Incirlik, Turkey, and then by C-130 to Merzifon. The annual exercise promoted coordination of multi-national forces assigned to Allied Forces Southern Europe and demonstrated NATO's readiness to deter aggression, as well as reinforce and resupply the Southern European region using air, land, naval and amphibious forces. Units from Italy, Portugal, Turkey, the U.K. and the U.S. participated. "Coronet Rider" was the nickname given to the part played by the 140th TFW in the massive exercise. The 9,000-mile A-7 deployment phase consisted of two legs. The first was a non-stop flight from Buckley ANGB to Torrejon AB, Spain. Aircraft were deployed in three flights of six with six air refuelings for the 10-hour flight. After crew rest at Torrejon, the deployment was completed with a five-hour flight to Merzifon, employing two air refuelings. On arrival of the A-7s, Maj Gen. Kenneth D. Burns, commander, U.S. Logistics Group (TUSLOG), sent a message saying, "Looking superbly precise and sharp, 18 A-7s from the 140th TFW, Buckley ANGB, CO, led by their commander, BG John L. France, landed on time at Merzifon AB. The jubilation of the aircrews and their support elements in the wake of such a long and successful deployment is exceeded only by the unit's enthusiasm for the task at hand." While deployed to Merzifon, the 140th flew 475 sorties totaling 1,169 hours. A mission-capable rate of 94 percent was achieved by maintenance personnel. Twenty-eight missions were amphibious operations, flown in the Saros Bay area in support of the 6th Fleet. Eleven tactical air support-maritime operations missions were flown over the Aegean Sea, where

140th pilots made attacks on simulated enemy convoys. The balance of the missions were training sorties to Konya Range, simulating low-level interdiction. During the three-day, surge-flying period the 140th sustained a 2.5 sortie rate. To prepare for their deployment, Guardsmen attended a 10 week course on the Turkish language as well as culture and political sensitivities from Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's impact on westernizing Turkey in the 1920s, to the current political situation presented at Buckley by staff members of the Air Force Academy. The lessons, particularly the use of Turkish courtesy phrases, proved extremely helpful in forming an instant rapport with the Turks. Combined with Turkish hospitality COANG preparations made for excellent relations during the entire deployment. The 20,000-mile round trip deployment proved the oft-proposed concept of deploying an ANG unit to a NATO "bare base," having it operational in a matter of hours, and turning air support missions as soon as possible. The trip home for the Colorado visitors included stops at Torrejon AB and Rickenbacker ANGB, Ohio, before eventually touching down at Buckley ANGB19 flying hours in three Jays. A flying milestone also occurred during the exercise. A 1.25- - our flight clocked a total of 25,000 hours for A-7 No. 001, one of the unit's oldest Corsairs. Aircraft 001 gained a Turkish name, "Cihanda Suhl," in the process. Coined years before by Turkish patriot Ataturk, the translation "Peace in the World" served the exercise well. After logging the 25,000-hour mark with 001's crew chief MSgt. Charles Hoffman, pilot France said, "The 25,000 hours truly represent a great team effort. We have the finest maintenance team around and their abilities, along with our support people's efforts, speak well for us today. We now have made three ocean crossings with the aircraft Holland, Panama and Turkey. The A-7 is one fine bird and will continue to serve us well.

Highlighting a 1981 banner year, newly appointed squadron commander LTC Wayne Schultz led the Colorado Air National Guard to the top team trophy in "Gunsmoke '81," earning distinction as the World Top Gun in the process. Pitting 12 of the best USAF, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard tactical fighter units in the world against each other for two weeks, the 1981 competition at Nellis AFB, Nev., was the first TAC-sponsored gunnery competition since 1962. Other members of the team included Maj Joseph M. Thomas, Cpt Charles Betts and Cpt Lawrence "Bud" Sittig, who finished third overall in the individual competition. Cpt Larry R. Sadler was the back-up pilot. While the Gunsmoke team was winning the competition, the rest of the squadron was performing as the first team in a "Maple Flag" exercise, winning accolades on that front also. In COANG history, legend sums up the stories that surround Gunsmoke '81. And, though there would be return trips to Nellis, nothing can compare to the 1981 victory. The decision for the Colorado ANG to participate in Gunsmoke '81 was a big one they had just finished an ORI and had aircraft scheduled to deploy to a Canadian "Maple Flag" exercise. The 140th entered the Nellis AFB tactical fighter aircraft "Super Bowl" in the hot, sweltering days of September 1981 the first time a contest of its type had been held since 1962. Colorado was one of the 12 teams flying either A-7s, A-10s or F-4s to have successfully battled its way through regional shoot-offs for a Gunsmoke berth. Competing teams were from the Pacific Air Command, U.S. Air Forces Europe, Alaskan Air Command, Tactical Air Command, the USAFR and ANG. The competitors endured a desert sandstorm and temperatures of 105 degrees. With humidity at zero, the heat became a great equalizer. On the frying-pan surface of the Nellis flightline, maintenance team NCOIC SMSgt. Moe Etter noted, "Keeping our A-7s in shape is much more difficult when it's three-degrees-cooler-than-hell on the ramp." Wing maintenance and munitions efforts kept the flying competition close. As one observer noted, "Some of the aircrews are so accurate hitting inside one-and-a-half and two meters they don't need high

explosives to destroy a target. Bear in mind, these are not 'smart' weapons. They're not precision, laser-guided weapons; they're free-fall bombs that aircrews are putting directly on target." When the smoke had cleared, Colorado won the Top Team award, amassing 8,800 out of a possible 10,000 points. The second-place team, the 23rd TFW, was 39.5 points behind, but the closest any of the other 10 teams could come was more than 300 points behind the winning score! The 140th claimed the award as best A-7 team as well.

At the same time as Gunsmoke, more than 150 Colorado Air Guard people, 12 A-7s, and assorted support equipment were at Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta. The 140th TFW was the main strike force for the first two weeks of month long joint forces exercise, "Maple Flag '81." Missions were flown in weather and terrain remarkably similar to Northern Europe.

The unit deployed to Eskisehir AB, Turkey, with RF-4s from the 155th Tac Recon Group, Lincoln, Neb., in October 1984 as a part of "Display Determination," a joint-forces NATO exercise.

In 1986, LTC Mason Whitney was named the commander of the 120th. During the year, the 120th deployed to Hawaii for dissimilar aircraft training with the Hawaii Guard; to Alaska to take part in a composite force exercise; and to Cold Lake, Canada, to take part in another Maple Flag exercise.

In June, the 120th TFS returned to Panama for another Coronet Cove rotation; the unit again found itself hosting Far Eastern visitors. More than 24 Japanese naval officers visiting Howard AFB were escorted and briefed by detachment commander LTC J.B. Stone.

In the fall, the wing prepared for a second "Sentry Aspen Flag" exercise, this time with more than 20 USAF and ANG units from across the nation. On Buckley's ramp more than 66 aircraft, including F-111s, F-105s, F-15s, F-16s, A-10s, A-7s, KC-135s, C-130s and an E-3A, were assembled. Nearly 300 visiting pilots and ground crew personnel participated. By the end of the two-day exercise, more than 220 sorties had been flown in less than 16 hours.

A sobering note concluded the year. While flying dissimilar air combat tactics near New Raymer, CO, Maj Thomas Nicholson ejected from his A-7 after it developed control difficulties. The Corsair crashed in a barren farm field and Nicholson escaped with injuries to a shoulder and knee, returning to fly a few months later.

In their third Coronet Cove deployment since 1978, nearly 120 Air Guard men and women rotated to Panama in March to assume responsibility for the defense of the Panama Canal. Nearly 450 Guardsmen one third of the state's ANG force performed their annual training in Gulfport, Miss., in May. It marked the second time in as many years that the 140th had deployed to the coastal ANG training site.

In September, the 140th gained an A-7K, a two-seat version of the D-model

Maintaining its reputation as one of the finest tactical fighter units in the ANG, the 140th TFW and 120th TFS took part in numerous deployments throughout 1983, including trips to

Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, as part of a second "Operation Midnight Sun" exercise; another Coronet Cove rotation to Panama in August; and two trips to Nellis AFB, Nev. The first deployment to Nellis saw the unit go into "Gunsmoke '83" to defend its world champion title against 15 of the best units in the ANG, AFRES and USAF. Colorado placed fifth overall, but was the highest ranked Guard or Reserve unit in the competition; Cpt Charlie Betts won the A-7 "Top Gun" title.

The wing returned to Nellis after the Gunsmoke competition to take part in "Red Flag 84-1" in November. More than 80 pilots, maintenance and support personnel generated a variety of missions including escort, interdiction, suppression of enemy air defenses and dissimilar-air combat training and live ordnance drops.

The 140th TFW made three major deployments in 1984. The first occurred May 12-26, when 460 people went to the ANG's permanent field training site at Gulfport, Miss., to conduct an Operational Readiness Exercise. With the help of advisers from the Air Force's 27th TFW, Cannon AFB, N.M., and working under combat conditions in chemical warfare scenarios (during days when the heat and humidity were usually in the high 80s), the wing was put through the paces for a successful ORI.

On the heels of the Gulfport deployment came the fifth Coronet Cove rotation to Panama in June, when 100 Air Guardsmen successfully completed 96 missions during Panama's monsoon like rainy season.

The third deployment, "Coronet Bronco," took place Sept. 29-Oct. 14, sending a mix of more than 400 Air Guard people from Colorado and Nebraska to Eskisehir Air Base, the headquarters for Turkey's 1st Tactical Air Force. Colorado's contingent numbered 218 persons and 12 A-7D Corsairs. The 401st Civil Engineering Squadron from Torrejon AB, Spain, rehabbed barracks and constructed a temporary city at Eskisehir, complete with dining, recreation, medical, administrative, shower, laundry and latrine facilities. Life in what became known as the Bronco Base Camp was comfortable but never confused with home. The exercise was highly successful with 120th TFS pilots flying more than 200 sorties.

The A-7Ds from Colorado played several roles in the NATO operation, demonstrating their primary function as air-to surface attack and close-air support aircraft as well as their air- to-air interdiction versatility against "enemy" aircraft. Nebraska's nine RF-4C Phantom II aircraft added pre- and post-strike photo reconnaissance capability.

Not all COANG concerns were global. Back at Buckley, LTC Arvey Mason, base commander, was embroiled in a storm of controversy over a draft revision updating the base's 1976 Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) study. The update, the first of its kind for the ANG or USAF, recommended restricted development and land use around the base to Arapahoe County and city of Aurora planners. Landowners and developers around the base, whose own interests didn't necessarily include the preservation of Buckley as a flying installation, protested incorporating these suggestions into city ordinances. The release of the study, along with announced plans to develop a future international airport north of Buckley that might interfere with its flying operations, propelled the base into a new realization that commanders would have

to stay closely involved in community concerns in the years to come.

The new year began shakily for Maj Clifford Montgomery, 120th TFS, when the controls of his A-7D started to fail Jan. 5, 1985, and his aircraft descended from 15,000 to 9,000 feet before beginning a nose-down spin. The major ejected, only to have to fight, seconds later, to keep his chute from carrying him into the fireball created by the crash just east of Agate, CO Montgomery fortunately escaped with little more than a sprained knee.

The Colorado ANG was once more in the international spotlight in 1985, participating in the humanitarian airlift of supplies for the famine-ravaged country of Ethiopia. In January, a COANG T-43 flew nearly 8 tons of medical supplies to McGuire AFB, N.J. There the load was consolidated with other emergency relief materials to be airlifted to African victims by MA The 500 boxes had to be loaded and unloaded by hand, a difficult but worthwhile effort.

October saw the mission capability of OL-BB double as two T-43s (military Boeing 737s), each configured to carry 64 passengers with a crew of five, were delivered from Andrews AFB, Md. The new aircraft, according to OL-BB's commander, LTC Melvin J. Walden, would conduct special airlift missions for NGB and MA OL-BB had been working toward receiving the aircraft for almost two years and soon put them to work: one flew a mission within two hours of its acceptance; the other's first OL-BB mission was flown the next morning.

Throughout 1986, COANG's pace of innovative and challenging activity never abated. In January, eight A-7s and 72 Guardsmen deployed to Key West, Fla., the first time an ANG unit had participated in U.S. Navy water survival training. In February, a portion of the 140th TFW deployed to Ankara, Turkey, as part of a "Dense Crop" NATO military preparedness operation. Other mini-deployments occurred in late January, March and April with trips to Kingsley Field, Ore., Luke AFB, Ariz. and Gowen Field, Idaho.

From May 4 to 17, eight A-7Ds and 91 persons deployed to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, for "Sentry Bronco." Three Utah ANG KC-135s provided airlift for personnel and cargo, offering enroute refueling as well on the seven-hour flight. The wing flew 102 sorties during the exercise. Thirty-five personnel and six A-7s traveled to Volk Field, Wis., in June for "Sentry Independence." The exercise was unique, incorporating Army and Air Guard units in a variety of realistic joint forces training scenarios.

A few days later, the 140th began another Coronet Cove rotation (its sixth) to Howard AFB. From June 27 through July 27, 108 Air Guard men and women, split into two detachments, carried out the now-familiar Panama Canal defense mission. This time there was a new twist to the flying operations. During the first two weeks of the operation, one overnight mission was flown to Goloson AB near the port of La Ceiba in northwestern Honduras . . . its purpose, to represent the U.S. government in rededication ceremonies at the Honduran air base.

The following month, wing people were again on the road conducting composite-force and dissimilar-air combat training with the 21st TFW, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. The 102 missions flown between July 19 and Aug. 2 included close-air support and interdiction.

If planes are brought in ceremoniously, so also are they retired as illustrated on Jan. 6, 1986, when the C-131 was flown for the last time. Tail No. 55-0292a two-engine, passenger plane with reciprocating engines made her last official landing at Buckley with Maj. Eric Hall and Steve Steenrod at the controls and MSgt. Leon Duggins as crew chief. Duggins, who had served as the airplane's crew chief for eight of its 10 years, came out of his two-day-old retirement to accompany the Convair on her final flight to Ellsworth AFB, S.D., where she was placed on permanent static display.

The evening of Aug. 28, 1986, was a long one for Maj Thomas Goyette, 120th TFS pilot. In a life-or-death struggle with his A-7, Goyette proved Colorado's pilots could not only fly "by the seat of their pants," but also "with the soles of their feet." Coming off a bomb run at Fort Carson's Airburst Gunnery Range, Goyette experienced severe control problems. As an investigation later revealed, a small metal plate used to secure a light assembly in the top of the airplane became dislodged, locking into place a rod affecting the aircraft's controls. His control stick frozen in the back position, Goyette's first attempt to bring the A-7 under control resulted in a violent pitch upward, followed by an inverted roll and a 400 mph dive towards the ground. The major heard the "eject" order, but couldn't grab the handles because both of his hands were fully involved in a desperate struggle to control the bird's wild gyrations. Jumping on the rudder pedals, Goyette rolled the stricken Corsair up and to the right. The maneuver worked and was repeated . . . over and over again . . . 70 long miles back to Buckley. While Buckley emergency crews and equipment stood by, Goyette maneuvered the A-7 for a barrier-engagement landing on Runway 32. On his first try, the fighter flipped over and stalled about 100 feet above the runway. A second try also resulted in a stall, followed by a crazy climb and pitch to the right, almost into the control tower. On the third try, Goyette came careening down the 11,000-foot concrete ribbon at close to 230 mph (normal landing speed is 150-160 miles per hour). His tail hook bounced over the first cable across the south end of the runway at the north end, a second cable caught. Goyette's 40-minute gambit was over. Saving the aircraft allowed investigators to discover a mechanical hazard that, uncorrected, could have impaired other aircraft in the nation's A-7 fleet.

April also marked the wing's seventh Coronet Cove deployment. In a new wrinkle, part of the first rotation stopped at Goloson AB, Honduras, to take part in joint forces exercise "Pegasus." During the 10-day successful exercise, 35 Colorado Air Guardsmen lived in tents.

In September of 1990 the 140th WG was selected for conversion to the F-16A/B, come December the conversion was to be to the F-16C/D. The conversion and subsequent organizational realignment significantly change the entire 140th WG; the aircraft maintenance community and the Fighter Squadron changed in ways they never dreamed. Generally units have 18 months to train and plan for conversion, the 140th took on an aggressive, compressed schedule. "We are rushing to put our first maintenance folks in school as quickly as possible," stated Box. "We are already behind in some school quotas, but we feel we can get everyone scheduled in when we need them to be there. In fact we have about 500 pilots and maintenance people that we've got to send to school. Some pilots will start attending three months of pilot training as early as June 1991." It is difficult to imagine the enormity of the task until you consider that the WG had to remain operational during the conversion. "Just because we're converting to the F-16 doesn't mean we stop flying the A-7," stated Box. In fact, during the

conversion you'll have people still working and flying the A-7, then you'll start getting people coming back from training and working and flying the F-16." The conversion affected everything. Maintainers and Pilots needed conversion training, facilities had to be upgraded, and the entire COANG workforce had to be restructured to fit the new mission.

**An Easier Scramble:** The Colorado Air National Guard's 120th Fighter Squadron at Buckley AFB, CO, has opened new aircrew alert quarters. This new \$4 million building is christened "911" to commemorate Operation Noble Eagle, which began following the 9/11 terrorist attacks to protect US airspace. The squadron, tasked with rapid-response air sovereignty alert with its F-16s, used temporary facilities after ONE commenced for its 24-hour alert crews. "For the last 10 years, we've been operating out of our temporary quarters that were literally trailers. These new shelters are state of the art," said BG Trulan Eyre, commander of Buckley's 140th Wing, parent organization of the fighter unit. Members of the Colorado Congressional delegation attended the grand opening ceremony on April 2. Capping the ribbon-cutting event was a mock alert scramble.

6/29/2005 -An F-16 pilot ejected safely after an emergency landing June 28 at nearby Lamar Airfield. The accident occurred during a training flight in a southeast Colorado military training area. He was attempting an emergency landing after receiving a cockpit fire warning indication. The pilot's wingman confirmed there was a fire in the aircraft tail section. The pilot followed emergency procedures and landed the aircraft at the nearest suitable airport, where he lost directional control upon landing and skidded off the runway. He then ejected safely and received minor injuries. There was no ordnance onboard the aircraft. The aircraft is assigned to the Colorado Air National Guard's 140th Wing here. A board is estimating the damage to the aircraft and the cause of the accident.

On 28 June 2005, at 1339 hours Mountain Daylight Time, an F-16C fighter aircraft, serial number 87-0337, was destroyed at Lamar Municipal Airport, Colorado. The Mishap Aircraft (MA) and Mishap Pilot (MP), assigned to the 120th Fighter Squadron, Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado, were participating in a two-ship, Basic Fighter Maneuvers (BFM) training mission when the MA experienced an engine fire approximately 30 minutes after takeoff. The MP flew a successful Simulated Flameout approach into Lamar Airport, but was forced to eject when the MA departed the prepared runway surface. There were no civilian injuries and only minor damage to private property. As the Mishap Flight (MF) finished their third BFM engagement, the MP received cockpit warning indications of an engine fire and flight control malfunctions. The mishap wingman confirmed the presence of a fire on the aft section of the MA, which rendered the engine nozzle, rudder, speedbrakes and one of the four flight control branches inoperative. Additionally, the damage to the flight controls rendered the left brake inoperative with the brake channel switch in the Channel 2 position, which the MP had inadvertently selected. The MP did not further troubleshoot the damage to the aircraft because of the continuing fire indications. The MA diverted into Lamar Airport, the closest suitable emergency airfield. The MP flew a Simulated Flameout approach due to the possibility of imminent engine failure, which increased his approach and landing speeds. On landing the MA veered to the right due to the inoperative left brake. When the MP determined that he no longer could prevent the MA from departing the prepared runway surface, he ejected. The MP received only minor injuries during ejection. The high-speed departure from the prepared runway surface destroyed the aircraft. The primary cause

of the mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was an improperly installed engine augments fan manifold that resulted in a fuel leak and subsequent aircraft fire. Failure to follow Technical Order guidance was the most likely cause of the improper installation. Despite the severity of the engine fire, the MP made a conscious decision to stay with the aircraft and was able to maneuver the aircraft to a safe landing. There was substantial evidence that the MP's failure to troubleshoot the damaged systems and the inadvertent movement of the brake channel switch contributed to the MP's inability to stop the aircraft.

With the completion of last month's Eager Lion 2013 exercise in Jordan, F-16s from the Colorado Air National Guard's 120th Fighter Squadron and Ohio Air Guard's 112th FS remained in Jordan to continue training activities with the Royal Jordanian Air Force. These aircraft were flying "continued training" sorties with the Jordanian military as of the end of June, said US Central Command spokesman Mark Blackington. Along with them, a pair of Army Patriot missile batteries stayed in Jordan after Eager Lion concluded on June 20. Air Forces Central Command officials noted that the exercise concluded with a large bilateral combat search and rescue exercise. This entailed the simulated rescue of a downed pilot behind enemy lines, with the participation of F-16s from the RJAf's No. 1 Squadron and the two US Air Guard units. Jordanian MD 530 and UH 60 helicopters also participated. Both US and Jordanian F-16s helped locate the pilot and cover the helicopter extraction, while other F-16s simulated hostile aircraft attempting to disrupt the rescue. 2013

The 140th FW's 120th TFS dates back to 27 June 1923. After WWII, the squadron was located at Buckley Field flying P-51Ds. These were replaced with F-80Cs in July 1953 and the squadron's designation was changed from the 120th FS to the 120th FIS squadron on 1 July 1955. In late 1956 they formed the "Minute Men" precision aerial flying demonstration team. In 1958, F-86Es replaced the Shooting Stars which were replaced by F-86Ls in 1960. On 1 January 1961, the squadron was redesignated the 120th TFS as they began conversion to F-100C/Fs. They were called to active duty as part of the Pueblo Crisis, and after a tour in Vietnam, they converted their F-100Cs to Ds. In April 1974, the squadron transitioned to the Vought A-7D. The A-7K was added later and in 1992 the A-7D/KS were replaced with F-16C/Ds

120th TFS A-7K 80-0294 taxis in South-East Asia style paint scheme. Wavy flag on tail was light blue-medium blue-white-medium blue-light blue

120th TFS A-7K 70-0469 in May 1991 in two-tone blue grey paint scheme with white mountains and Colorado on the fin tip.

430312	L-4	42-15217	120 Obsn	77 Obsn	Biggs Field, TX	FLEF	Williams, Mitchell M	5 Mi NW Biggs Field, TX
430725	L-5	42-14855	120 Recon	77 Recon	Biggs Field, TX	MACOB	Brochmann, Michael J	10 Mi S Biggs Field, TX
430806	P-39N	42-18877	120 Recon	77 Recon	Abilene, TX	LACMF	Price, Jack B	Abilene AAF, TX

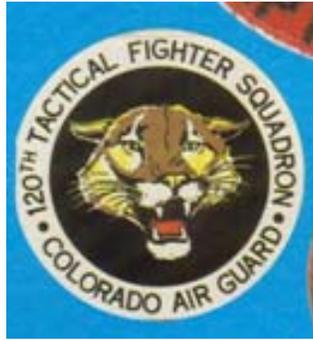
430908	P-39N	42-8825	120 Tac Recon	77 Tac Recon	Abilene, TX	TACGC	Betts, Curtis F	AAF, Abilene, TX
430908	P-40N	42-105497	120 Tac Recon	77 Tac Recon	Abilene, TX	TACGC	Parked Airplane	AAF, Abilene, TX
430917	P-39N	42-18928	120 Tac Recon	77 Tac Recon	Esler Field, LA	KCRSSP	Weiler, James E	3 Mi W Kurthwood, LA
430917	P-39N	42-8840	120 Tac Recon	77 Tac Recon	Esler Field, LA	TACMF	Cloud, Carl E	Esler Field

470404	P-51D-25NA	44-72707	120FS	140FG	Buckley Fld, CO	LACNU	Sigismund, David (NMI)	Buckley Fld
470620	AT-6C	42-48903	120FS	140FG	Buckley Fld, CO	TAC	Haarvey, Warren P	Buckley Fld
471109	P-51D	44-72844	120FS	140FG	Buckley Field, CO	LACMF	Diller, William G Jr	Buckley Field, CO
500427	F-51D	44-72758	120FS	140FG	Buckley Field, CO	LACGL	Lewis, Willard N.	Buckley Field
500502	F-51D	44-74345	120FS	140FG	Buckley Field, CO	TAC	Coomer, Winett A.	Buckley Field
500614	F-51D	44-73176	120FS	140FG	Buckley Field, CO	TAC	Toll, Henry C.	McNamara Field
510503	F-51D	44-74202	120FS	140FG	NAS Buckley, CO	LACMF	Dorsett, Glenn W.	Hill AFB
461128	P-51D-25NA	44-72803	120FS	COANG	Buckley Fld, CO	KCR	Kolb, Herbert G	Lowry Fld/ 1 1/2mi S
421214	Tigermoth	DE-930	120OS	67OG	AAF Sta 466 (RAF Membury)	TACGL	Watson, Thomas W	RAF Membury, Berkshire, ENG
421019	O-47A	37-387	120OS	77OG	Biggs Field, TX	TACMF	Ludwig, John R	Biggs Field, TX
421112	L-4A	42-36600	120OS	77OG	Biggs Field, TX	LACNU	Doty, Robert L	Nations East Wells, TX
371119	O-19E	31-547	120OS	CONG	Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACGL	Brown, Raymond R	Atlanta Muni Airport, GA

381228	O-19E	31-543	1200S	CONG	unknown	unknown	Sebree, Trow E.	unknown
250118	JNSE	25-12	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	SSPCR	Wilsom, R. M.	Denver, CO
291013	O-2H	29-393	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	FLEFNO	Reavis, Carlos L.	Durango, CO
330115	O-17	30-89	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACNU	Rankin, Charles H.	Lowry Field, Denver, CO
330517	O-2H	28-352	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LAC	Stone, Virgil D.	Lowry Field, Denver, CO
340722	O-38	30-415	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACNO	Mumey, Nolie	Airport, Gunnison, CO
340906	O-2H	29-351	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	FLEDFD	Stone, Virgil D.	Calhan, CO
350614	O-19E	31-541	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACGL	Cunningham, Eugene	Lowry Field, CO
360104	O-19E	31-527	1200S		Denver, CO	TAC	Vaughan, Virgil W.	Chicago Muni Airport, IL
360313	O-19E	31-543	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	FLEF	Houghton, Henry S.	Silverton, TX
361014	O-19B	31-524	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACGL	Wellman, Harrison W., Jr	Thornburg, CO
370606	O-19E	31-547	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LACGL	Hunter, William E	Muni Airport, Colorado Springs, CO
380601	C-19E	31-541	1200S		Muni Airport, Denver, CO	LACGL	Combs, Harry B	Muni Airport, Denver, CO
381230	O-19E	31-523	1200S		Denver, CO	LACGL	Woodward, M. B.	Colorado Springs, CO
400214	O-47A	37-267	1200S		Lowry Field, Denver, CO	LAC	Cunningham, Eugene	Lowry Field, CO
410411	O-47A	37-348	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	LAC	Hendrick, W. B.	Biggs Field, TX

410821	O-49	40-251	1200S		Biggs Field, Lake Charles, LA	TOA	Gaskin, John R	Pitkin, LA
410901	O-49	40-250	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	TOA	Lewis, Henry A	Camp Polk, TX
410908	RO-47A	37-335	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	FLoGW	Kaiser, Caeser S	Mississippi River, Baton Rouge, LA
411013	RO-47A	37-348	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	KCRGC	Hunt, Willis B	San Andres Mts, 60 mi N El Paso, TX
420120	O-49	40-252	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	FLEF	Matheson, William K	Anthony, NM
420206	L-1A	41-18922	1200S		Biggs Field, Ft Bliss, TX	TOA	Dockrey, Raymond V	Terlingua, TX
420317	L-4A	42-15202	1200S		Biggs Field, Ft Bliss, TX	TOA	Hayes, William D	Alpine, TX
420317	L-4A	42-15208	1200S		Biggs Field, Ft Bliss, TX	FLEF	Trachsel, William H	Welcome Aux Fld, 20 mi N Biggs Fld, TX
420526	L-4A	42-15205	1200S		Biggs Field, TX	TOASSP	Berryhill, H.L.	Dona Ana Target Range, NM
430930	P-39N	42-8823	120RS	77RG	Esler Field, Alexandria, LA	BOF	Rogers, Floyd V	6 Mi S Alco, LA
431103	P-39F	41-7183	120TRSq	77TRGp	Esler Field, LA	TOAEF	Deen, William W., Jr	Barksdale Field, LA





### **LINEAGE**

136<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron (Construction) organized Aug 1917  
Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron (Supply), Sep 1917  
Redesignated 120<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron (Service), Oct 1917  
Demobilized, May 1919

### **STATIONS**

Kelly Field, TX  
Ellington Field, TX, Nov 1917  
Garden City, NY, Feb 1918  
Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NY, Feb 1918  
AEF, Feb, 1918  
Mitchel Field, NY

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Air Force Order of Battle  
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#### Sources

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Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.