

## 144<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER WING



### LINEAGE

Activated as 144<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Wing, Oct 1950

Redesignated 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, 15 Mar 1992 *16 March 1992*

### STATIONS

Hayward, CA

Hammer Field, Fresno, CA, 1954

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### WEAPON SYSTEMS

##### Mission Aircraft

##### Support Aircraft

C-26A

C-26B

### COMMANDERS

BG John F. Turner, 15 Apr 1950

Col Rollin B. Moore, 1951-1958

Col Leslie B. Smith, 1959

Col George W. Edmonds, 1962

Col Marvel M. Taylor, 25 Aug 1965

Col Milton R. Graham, 1968-1973

BG James A. Kilpatrick, 1973-1982

BG Edward R. Aguiar, 1982

Col Allen W. Boone, #1993

Col Sami D. Said Apr 2011

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

The 144th Fighter Wing is comprised of the Headquarters Group and four subordinate units: Maintenance Group, which consists of the 144th Maintenance Squadron, 144th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, and 144th Maintenance Operations Flight; Operations Group, which consists of the 194th Fighter Squadron and 144th Operations Flight; 144th Mission Support Group, which consists of 144th Civil Engineer Squadron, 144th Security Forces Squadron, 144th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 144th Communications Flight, 144th Mission Support Flight, and 144th Services Flight; and the 144th Medical Group.

On 7 Jul 1955, the Wing was redesignated as the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing, with the 194th becoming the 194th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. At the same time, the 194th relocated to Fresno, followed by the wing in 1957. The site of the Fresno Air National Guard Base has been used for military aviation since World War II, when it was known as Hammer Field.

By September of 1956 Shields Ave. had been rerouted to allow for a 1000 foot extension of the runways. In 1959 Guard and city officials began plans for another 2000 foot extension which Uncle Sam would pay for.

The 1962 extension really brought Fresno civilians into jet age because it made Fresno air terminal capable of handling large commercial jets. Again in 1968 the guard contributed to the upgrading of the runway when \$210,883 was spent half the cost to resurface. The project closed the runway for 58 days but upon completion even the heaviest commercial and military aircraft of the time can land in Fresno.

Most personnel of the 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor now accomplished their annual field training on the Texas plan scheduling to mutual satisfaction of supervisors and the individual. The last time the 144 was totally deployed for AFT was the summer of 1969. Even before the troops left for Gulfport Mississippi they heard of a tropical storm in the Gulf of Mexico being upgraded to hurricane and being christened Camille. Being inexperienced with such things few of them gave it much thought until they could see the first clouds of the system as their planes approached the Gulf. Heavy winds and rains were projected for two days later as the storm was to pass east of training site. Due to forecast the units F102 aircraft were wisely grounded in Texas for the

duration of the storm. Camille grew becoming the most intensive hurricane in history packing winds up to 190 mph. She unexpectedly West to center her death and destruction on Gulfport. The 144 responded by sending its medics into action helping evacuate civilians. Further training became impossible at the training site. The 144 returned to Fresno to complete the AFT and mount operation Camille Mercy which collected and airlifted food and water to the victims. Two C-119s from the 146 tactical airlift wing at Van Nuys California were filled by generous guardsmen and civilians throughout the Fresno area.

The 144 fighter interceptor group distinguished itself exceptional meritorious service from 15 January 1972 to 30 April 1973. The group was awarded another Air Force outstanding unit award.

The wing received a third Air Force outstanding unit award for the units exceptionally meritorious service the period between 10 July 1976 and 30 June 1978.

In 1979, the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing was reassigned from the Air Defense Command to the Tactical Air Command.

In the fall of 1980 the 144 fighter interceptor wing won its first championship in the prestigious William Tell weapons meet at Tyndall Air Force Base Florida. Competing against the cream of US and Canadian regular and reserve units the 144 took the general Daniel chappie James Junior fighter interceptor team award and the Sperry Lou Beene trophy for top F106 team. Winning the F106 competition put the 144 fighter interceptor wing's inscription on the coveted Richard I. Bong trophy. The support crew brought back the best F106 maintenance trophy. The air combat instrumentation cubic award was also awarded to Fresno. Sep 1980

Late in January of 1981 the 144 fighter interceptor wing acquired responsibility for detachment one at George Air Force Base California. A smooth transition from active Air Force to air National Guard was accomplished at the isolated desert facility near Victorville California. Aircraft and pilots serve on rotating basis from the Fresno air National Guard base and are supported at the detachment by 15, permanent party personnel. Voluntary relocation and new enlistments provided sufficient personnel to man the site. Additional support personnel are sent temporary duty on an as needed basis. Original projections called for between 20 and 30 permanently assigned enlisted personnel to support the two or three aircraft there.

In 1992, the 144th FW was reassigned to Air Combat Command. Effective 16 Mar 1992, the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing was redesignated as the 144th Fighter Wing, with all related Fighter Interceptor Groups and Squadrons becoming Fighter Groups and Fighter Squadrons.

Throughout its history, the 144th has earned a number of honors and distinctions. The wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award in 1967, 1973, 1978, 1988 and 1994. Other honors include winning the William Tell air-to-air weapons meet at Tyndall AFB, Fla., and numerous maintenance and safety awards.

*The Airmen of the 144th Fighter Wing in 2010 concluded another outstanding year full of accomplishments and unit recognition for its members' hard work and volunteerism in the spirit*

*of the California Air National Guard. From successfully executing a Phase I Operational Readiness Inspection to deploying personnel in support of contingencies overseas, members of the 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing earned both state and national awards for their achievements. The 144th's primary mission is to provide air defense for California, utilizing the F-16C Fighting Falcon aircraft. The 144th also provides support for counterdrug enforcement, natural disaster response, civil unrest and community assistance when requested by the governor. The unit primarily operates out of the Air National Guard Base in Fresno but also maintains an alert detachment at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif. In addition to the 24-hour operation of two alert sites, the 144th continued to support operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom with 44 personnel deployed to bases throughout the world. In June the 144th Fighter Wing executed an Air Combat Command Phase I Operational Readiness Inspection, successfully passing the challenge, which included deploying 300 wing personnel and 96 tons of equipment to two theaters of operation using air and land transportation. In July the unit deployed about 100 members, 64 tons of equipment and seven F-16 aircraft to Kona, Hawaii, in support of the Navy's Rim of the Pacific Exercise, which involved 14 foreign nations. Due to the overwhelming success and numerous accolades from Pacific Air Forces Commander Gen. Gary North, the wing was invited to Kona again in 2012 for RIMPAC. In August the wing's fire department was named the 2009 National Guard Outstanding Fire Department of the Year. The 144th firefighters supported a deployment to Anderson Air Base, Guam, a joint effort in which nearly 100 members of the California National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological/ Nuclear and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) joined forces with other CERFP teams, local firefighters and other first response agencies participating in Vigilant Guard Guam. In September members of the 144th Medical Group deployed to the Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Mich., for expeditionary medical support training. Overall the 144th Fighter Wing deployed 33 Airmen plus 11 personnel from geographically separated units in support of operational missions overseas and on the California- Mexico border. In the spirit of volunteerism, the 144th Fighter Wing continues to be an integral part of its local community. Wing members participated in numerous aircraft flyovers and community events, and the wing continued its long-time support for holiday programs such as Silent Sleigh. The state of California recognized the accomplishments of several groups by awarding the Governor's Outstanding Unit Award to the 144th Civil Engineering Squadron, Force Support Squadron, Logistics Readiness Squadron, Security Forces Squadron and Communications Flight. The 144th Fighter Wing had an extremely busy and fulfilling year, participating in multiple exercises, inspections, deployments and community events. Airmen and volunteers throughout the wing continue to shine in their efforts to support their neighbors, state and nation.*

More than 140 members of the Air National Guard landed at Mirgorod Air Base, Ukraine, in July, preparing for the U.S. European Command-sponsored aerial military-to-military exchange event Safe Skies. A rainbow unit of National Guard Airmen composed of members from California, Alabama, Massachusetts, Washington and Wisconsin flew into a base that until then had only seen use by Mig-29 and Su-27s. Following advance teams of maintenance and support personnel, seven F-16C from Alabama and Iowa cut through the calm, blue Ukrainian sky and landed July 16. The two-week Safe Skies event was designed to provide an opportunity for Ukrainian, Polish and American personnel to fly together and help prepare the Polish and Ukrainian forces for enhanced air supremacy and air sovereignty operations. It was also intended to foster improved communication and collaboration between the countries. "Working together

with the Ukrainian and Polish Air Forces is important to U.S. interests in that it helps promote regional stability,” said LTC Robert Swertfager, Safe Skies project officer and a member of the CNG’s Fresno-based 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. “This event increases our collective capacity to address common security challenges.” Through the State Partnership Program, the California Air National Guard had been planning this event since 2009. “Our partnership has laid the foundation for this event, and this engagement is providing Ukraine an amazing opportunity to learn more about air sovereignty operations as they prepare for the EUROcup 2012,” Swertfager said. EUROcup refers to the Union of European Football Associations’ European Football Championship. Poland and Ukraine will jointly host the 2012 finals. The National Guard provided invaluable training for the Polish and Ukrainian forces, completing about 120 intercept missions involving National Guard and Polish F-16s as well as Ukrainian MIG-29 and SU-27. In these missions, U.S. pilots operated as if they were distressed, hijacked, lost or flying in a simulated restricted airspace. The Ukrainian and Polish forces then responded to mitigate the potential airborne threat. The California National Guard has partnered with Ukraine since 1993 to help the former Soviet state develop its military and civilian capacities for security, emergency management and organization. Exercises like Safe Skies require Ukrainian and Polish forces to test their response mechanisms, which prepare them for a real airborne threat. “We learned so much from the events of 11 Sep 2001,” said LTC Kirk Toomey, the Safe Skies operations project officer and alert commander at the Fresno-based 144<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. “We want to share from our experiences and better enable them to protect their citizens from any terrorist threats. Protecting the EUROcup spectators is similar to us protecting the football fans watching the Super Bowl.” During Safe Skies, National Guard pilots also worked with the Polish Air Force to test communications limitations specific to air sovereignty operations. “The collaboration with Poland is also a very important aspect of this event,” Toomey said. “[For Ukraine], working with Poland is similar to the U.S. working with Canada. Understanding each others’ tactics is critical to the collaboration required in air sovereignty missions.” As flying operations commenced, so did aircraft maintenance operations. Twenty-six independent maintenance organizations from different states worked together as a synergistic team. The National Guard members also harnessed the collective strength of the Ukrainian maintainers, working beyond language and supply limitations to achieve a very aggressive flying schedule. “The maintenance and logistics teams have worked extremely hard to ensure this event has been as successful as it has; it takes a great deal of planning and determination when you are in uncharted waters,” said Col. Scott Patten, commander of the Alabama National Guard’s 187<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. “This is the first State Partnership event of this size and the first time an Air National Guard unit has operated out of Ukraine.” “This state partnership initiative sets the foundation for future training with Ukraine,” Toomey added. “The lessons learned during this engagement will provide us with valuable information for deploying Fresno fighter aircraft and personnel in the future.” In addition to the valuable training, many Airmen spoke happily about the international friendships that grew through the course of the event. “We have been completely successful in our mission,” LTG Vasyl Nikiforov, deputy commander of the Ukrainian Air Force, said July 29 during the closing ceremonies. “We have accomplished this historic event and developed lasting friendships.” Senior Airman Stephen Butler of the 187<sup>th</sup> said Safe Skies enabled the different countries’ Airmen to “share our joint desire to protect our citizens from any threat.” “We are both in the business to serve and protect our nations,” he said of the Safe Skies participants. “We all had an opportunity to share stories and create new and exciting friendships. With the information learned and new views of a culture that was once foreign to us, we went home with a great new

appreciation of how Ukraine, Poland and the U.S. can work together on future projects.” 2011

The 144th Fighter Wing concluded another year of outstanding accomplishments and enjoyed unit recognition for impressive work and volunteerism. From working as Type II hand crews on California’s devastating wildfires to witnessing Airmen receive the newly created Air Force Combat Action Medal, members of the 144th earned respect and received both state and national awards for their achievements.

The wing’s primary mission is to provide air defense for California from the Mexico border to Oregon, utilizing the F-16C Fighting Falcon aircraft. The 144th also responds to state emergencies when requested by the governor. The unit primarily operates from the Air National Guard Base in Fresno and from an alert detachment located at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside.

In April, the unit was recognized by 1st Air Force with the Air Sovereignty Alert Unit of the Year Award for its unprecedented actions of standing watch for the entire West Coast in December 2007.

The 144th provided aircraft and personnel to three alert sites simultaneously for the first time in history when the Air Force grounded its entire fleet of F-15s for structural integrity issues.

Wing pilots flew more than 2,300 sorties and 3,100 flight hours in 2008. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the 144th has flown more than 1,400 combat air patrol sorties in support of the homeland security mission Operation Noble Eagle. In addition to commitments at home, the 144th continues to support military operations throughout the world, including operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

In support of Operation Lightning Strike, when Northern California lightning storms ignited more than 2,000 fires in late June, the 144th deployed personnel to supplement the Joint Force Headquarters staff and to augment local non-military firefighting groups. Fifty-four Airmen received training as Type II ground hand crews to augment Californian Department of Forestry and Fire Protection personnel. In addition, the wing’s RC-26B aircraft provided crucial real-time, full-motion video and imagery for the

Governor's Office of Emergency Services and Cal Fire incident commanders. 144th Security Forces Squadron personnel and civil engineers trained at Camp San Luis Obispo in February on their respective responsibilities, including close-quarter combat, convoy drills and team-building exercises. During separate deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, two civil engineering Airmen received the Air Force Combat Action Medal. More than thirty medics and dental technicians from the 144th Medical Group deployed to Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu to conduct hands-on training alongside Soldiers for their twoweek clinical instruction. Medical Group personnel also participated in multiple Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package, or CERFP, exercises throughout the year, culminating in their first annual team certification. Wing members also participated in Staff Assistance Visits, a Logistics Standardization and Evaluation Team inspection, an Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Compliance Assessment and a Management Program inspection, and prepared for a Health Services Inspection to be held in 2009. The wing's alert forces also received "Mission Ready" status for their two Alert Forces Evaluations conducted in 2008. Through volunteerism, the 144th Fighter Wing continues to be an integral part of its local community. Wing members participated in numerous aircraft flyovers and community events, including Habitat for Humanity Fresno, Tree Fresno, the Community Food Bank, and the Children's Hospital Radiothon, in addition to having a large presence at this year's Veteran's Day Parade. The wing continues its longtime support for holiday programs Toys for Tots and Silent Sleigh. Also in 2008, the wing's pioneer Young Heroes program presented medals to four children who have shown great strength in fighting life-threatening illnesses. The Fresno Family Readiness Group was honored in February with the 2007 Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Award. Individual awards included the 1st Air Force Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award, the Air

Reserve Component Antiterrorism Officer of the Year and the California Unit Career Advisor of the Year. California also recognized the accomplishments of three groups for their outstanding service by awarding them the Governor's Outstanding Unit Award in 2008: the 144th Mission Support Group, Services

Flight and Security Forces Squadron.

The California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing in Fresno is on track to reach full operational capability with the F-15C early next year. The unit declared initial operational capability on the Eagle last October, after converting from the F-16C, Drudge said. The 144th FW received its first F-15C in June 2013, and currently boasts a total of 23 aircraft—two more than the unit's designated primary mission aircraft inventory, he noted. Unit officials are aiming for FOC in February 2016, and will make their final determination based on unit performance in an upcoming iteration of exercises Red Flag and Sentry Savannah/Atlantic Spear, Drudge said. Wing jets took part in Sentry Savannah 15-2 back in May, and also plan to take part in the annual bilateral NORAD air defense exercise Vigilant Shield with the Royal Canadian Air Force later this year. 2015

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

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