

## 185 AIR REFUELING WING



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

185 Tactical Fighter Group established, 11 Sep 1962

Organized, 1 Oct 1962

Ordered into active service, 26 Jan 1968

Relieved from active duty and returned to the control of the state of Iowa, 28 May 1969

Redesignated 185 Fighter Group, 16 Mar 1992

Redesignated 185 Fighter Wing, 1 May 1992

Redesignated 185 Air Refueling Wing, 1 Nov 2003

### STATIONS

Sioux City, IA

### ASSIGNMENTS

Iowa Air National Guard

### WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-51, 1946

P-51, 1951

F-100, 1961

A-7, 1977

F-16, 1991

KC-135, 2003

### COMMANDERS

Col Warren Nelson, Apr 1976

Col Dudley Smidt, May 1980

Col Gerald Swartzbaugh, Oct 1983  
Col Dennis Swanstrom, Oct 1987  
Col V. Thomas Considine, Dec 1998  
Col John Janson, Aug 2001  
Col Donald W. Forney  
Colonel Brian A. Miller

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1986

1987

1990

1991

2007

2008

## **EMBLEM**



Blue represents the blue skies of Iowa; Yellow represents the yellow cornfields of Iowa; Silver Arrows represents the squadrons that make up the wing; Feather helps control the flight of our spear and the red tip represents the blood lost; Indian head represents our weapons; Lightning bolts represents the quick action taken by the squadrons to get the task done; Spear also represents our weapons.

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

On October 1, 1962, the Iowa Air National Guard was reorganized and designated as the 185 Tactical Fighter Group, nearly doubling the authorized personnel to over 800 officers and airmen. This era would also mark the longest continuous period of flying one aircraft. The 185 flew the F-100 from 1961 until 1977.

National attention focused on the unit in 1989 when United Airlines Flight 232, flown by a crew led by Captain Al Haynes, was forced to crash land at the Sioux City Airport. With one engine out, and its' hydraulic and backups not operating, the pilot could only turn the plane in one direction. With a key role in the crash recovery and rescue of survivors in the crash, the quick efforts of the 185 undoubtedly saved numerous lives and showed the nation the true heart of the unit. A photo of Colonel Dennis Neilson carrying a 2-year old Spencer Baily from the wreckage became a symbol of the heroism and compassion of the unit.

On December 19, 1991, the 185 received its first F-16s. The 185 Tactical Fighter Group was redesignated the 185 Fighter Group on March 16, 1992, and was rated operational on April 15th of that year. As the Air Guard standardized its structure, the 185 was designated the 185 Fighter Wing. As the world changes, the missions of the units must adapt and change as well. For the first time in its history, the unit will not be flying single engine jets. The 185 will be flying multi-engine KC-135 refueling tankers. They were redesignated the 185 Air Refueling Wing. In November 2003, the first all Sioux City crew flew a KC-135 out of Sioux City. Within a year, the 185 was flying refueling missions out of Geilenkirchen, Germany supporting NATO AWACS.

Closer to home, the KC-135s of the 185 Air Refueling Wing flew multiple missions transporting troops and supplies in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast region in September 2005.

In 2007, the 185 began transitioning from KC-135E to KC-135R, newer planes, with larger engines, capable of more missions, making the 185 a unit ready to serve, whenever and wherever they are needed.

The 185 ARW was the first ever ANG tanker unit to integrate with active duty forces at Manas AB, Kyrgyzstan flying 288 combat sorties totaling 1451 hours while offloading a record setting 15.8 million pounds of fuel to 621 receivers. The unit deployed over 30% of its unit members in support of Operations JUMP START, IRAQI FREEDOM, NOBLE EAGLE AND ENDURING FREEDOM. Over 250 unit members deployed to Incirlik, Turkey. Meanwhile, on the home front, Over 600 Airmen deployed throughout the state to support Iowa towns in flood relief efforts.

F-16s of the Iowa Air National Guard's 132nd Fighter Wing and a KC-135 from the state's 185

Air Refueling Wing flew to Australia, joining Royal Australian Air Force airmen for exercise Sentry Down Under. Operating from RAAF Base Williamstown in New South Wales, the F-16s will engage RAAF F-18s in dissimilar air-to-air combat training, while the KC-135 provides air refueling support. "We get to fight against F-18s, different pilots, and they're a very skilled air force," said 132nd FW commander Col. Drew DeHaes, according to a report from WHO TV 13 of Des Moines, Iowa. The Air Guardsmen began departing their bases in Des Moines and Sioux City on Feb 13 for the three-week exercise. Though this is the first time the lowans have participated, Williamstown routinely hosts Air Guard units for Sentry. Hawaii's 199th FW and Oregon's 132nd FW took part in 2008 and 2009, respectively. 2011

1/30/2012 - Sioux City, Iowa -- The National Guard Bureau in Washington DC announced that the 185 Air Refueling Wing (ARW) from Sioux City, Iowa has been awarded the 2011 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for outstanding achievement from November, 2009 to October, 2011. Col. Brian Miller, commander of the 185 ARW said this award is not just for the unit members. "This award is for the 185 family members and the communities where we live. The wing, comprised of over 800 members, flies nine KC-135R and is comprised of numerous support elements. The wing's main mission is to provide mid-air refueling and mobility sustainment in support of the global mission of the Air Force. As a community based organization, the wing is also tasked to support the state of Iowa in the event of a state emergency. During the two year time period starting in November of 2009, nearly 400 members of the 185 have deployed to numerous locations throughout the world in support of Department of Defense contingency operations. Members of the 185 have deployed to 24 countries including Iraq, Afghanistan and missions in support of Operation Odyssey Dawn in Libya, many of which were short notice deployments. In addition to supporting global missions, this past summer the 185 ARW served as the Air Operations Center for flood relief and provided members to monitor levee conditions in the Sioux City area.

NATO AIR BASE GEILENKIRCHEN, Germany (AFNS) -- This month, members of the Iowa Air National Guard's 185 Air Refueling Wing based in Sioux City, Iowa, are refueling NATO Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft while assigned here.

Approximately 40 members from the 185 ARW are in Germany for two weeks supporting NATO missions.

The AWACS involves multifaceted radar equipped aircraft that provide surveillance, command and control for NATO areas of responsibility. Onboard aircraft crews provide communications and control for U.S. and partner nations, while also keeping a close eye on potential adversaries. These missions require long flight times and in-flight refueling provided by Air Guard units like the 185 ARW.

According to Royal Netherlands Air Force Capt. André Bongers, a public affairs officer stationed at Geilenkirchen, the long-standing partnership with the Air Guard is important to maintaining stability in the region.

"This has always been a very successful partnership," Bongers said. "During 40 weeks per year the Air Guard provides essential training to the NATO E-3A Component. This is vital because pilots at the E-3A Component normally stay around for only four years. This means there's a high demand for training to ensure new crew members are combat ready. The high level of professionalism and flexibility delivered by the Air Guard is of great importance to get the right amount of training."

NATO AWACS play a critical role in many ongoing missions in the region, Bongers said, such as counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria operations, Eastern Europe surveillances and Mediterranean maritime operations. He said they also fly for high visibility events such as the recent NATO summit in Warsaw and big regional exercises like Red Flag and Arctic Challenge.

According to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Joseph Bosch, the Air National Guard's liaison in Geilenkirchen, the Air Guard has been working with NATO forces since 2015. Bosch also said that the Air Guard brings a level of unmatched experience to refueling operations, especially units like the 185 ARW.

"It is always a pleasure having the 185 (ARW). This wing has a special dedication to this mission and shows time and again how much they love our mission here. Sioux City always brings their A game to make this special spot better than when they arrived," Bosch said.

The 185 ARW will remain in Germany until the end of the week and will be followed by another Air Guard unit from Topeka, Kansas.

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USAF Unit Histories  
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#### Sources

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