

## 420 FLIGHT TEST SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

420 Night Fighter Squadron constituted, 25 May 1943

Activated, 1 Jun 1943

Disbanded, 31 Mar 1944

420 Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber, constituted, 8 Dec 1953

Activated, 18 Mar 1954

Redesignated 420 Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical, 8 Aug 1958

Discontinued and inactivated, 25 Mar 1964

420 Night Fighter Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 420 Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical, 19 Sep 1985

6520 Test Squadron designated and activated, 10 Mar 1989

420 Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical and 6520 Test Squadron consolidated, 1 Oct 1992

Redesignated 420 Test Squadron, 2 Oct 1992

Redesignated 420 Flight Test Squadron, 1 Mar 1994

Inactivated, 30 Dec 1997

Redesignated 420 Flight Test Flight, 24 Sep 2001

Activated in the Reserve, 1 Oct 2001

Inactivated, 31 Oct 2007

Redesignated 420 Flight Test Squadron

Activated

### STATIONS

Orlando AB, FL, 1 Jun 1943  
Kissimmee AAFld, FL, 1 Jun 1943  
Dunnellon AAFld, FL, 20 Aug 1943  
Hammer Field, CA, 18 Jan-31 Mar 1944  
Alexandria (later, England) AFB, LA, 18 Mar 1954-22 Sep 1955  
Sculthorpe RAF Station (later, RAF Sculthorpe), England, 9 Oct 1955-25 Mar 1964  
Edwards AFB, CA, 10 Mar 1989-30 Dec 1997  
Mesa, AZ, 1 Oct 2001

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Air Defense Department, AAF School of Applied Tactics, 1 Jun 1943  
481 Night Fighter Operational Training Group, 26 Jul 1943-31 Mar 1944  
Ninth Air Force, 18 Mar 1954  
Third Air Force, 9 Oct 1955  
Seventeenth Air Force, 1 Jul 1961  
7375 Combat Support Group, 1 Oct 1962-25 Mar 1964  
6510 (later, 412 Test Group, 10 Mar 1989-30 Dec 1997  
622 Flight Test Group, 1 Oct 2001

### **ATTACHMENTS**

481 Night Fighter Operational Training Group, 17-25 Jul 1943  
366 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 18 Mar 1954-22 Sep 1955  
47 Bombardment Wing, 15 Mar 1960-1 Jul 1961-8 Nov 1961  
7375 Combat Support Group, unkn-30 Sep 1962

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

AT-11  
A-20  
P-70  
BT-13  
C-78, 1943-1944  
P/YP-61, 1944  
KB-29, 1954-1959  
KB-50, 1956-1964  
B-2, 1989-1997

### **COMMANDERS**

LTC William C. Odell, 1 Jun 1943  
Cpt Porter B. Williamson, 22-31 Mar 1944  
LTC Frederick R. Bates  
Maj J. F. Groom, by Dec 1954  
Maj James B. Young, by Jun 1955  
LTC James R. Sheffield, by Dec 1955  
LTC Henry A. Dafler, by Jan 1959

Maj Clyde G. Miller, by Jan 1960  
LTC Theodore J. Tanner, 4 Mar 1960  
LTC Lawrence E. Spears, 15 Jun 1961  
LTC Joseph F. McAllister, 14 Aug 1963-25 Mar 1964  
LTC John Small, 10 Mar 1989  
Maj Perry L. Lamy, 24 Apr 1991  
LTC Steven E. Cameron, 1 Jul 1994  
LTC Walter A. Grady Jr., 28 Jun 1996  
LTC Ronald E. Johnston, 28 Apr-30 Dec 1997  
LTC Chris Loeppke, 1 Oct 2001  
LTC John A. Bowes Jr., 19 Oct 2004  
LTC Thomas R. Saxon, 15 Nov 2005  
LTC Robert Downey

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan-31 Dec 1995

1 Jan-31 Dec 1996

1 Jan-30 Dec 1997

## **EMBLEM**



420 Night Fighter Squadron emblem: On a rectangle, long axis horizontal, divided per fess debased neutralized yellow orange and light neutralized yellow orange, a caricatured black owl, YAHOOTY, expressing an attitude of alert watchfulness, wearing a light blue gray night cap, light

red bedroom slippers, and carrying a blue gray machine gun under the left wing and a lighted match held aloft in feather tips of right wing, all highlighted yellow and casting a grayed blue violet shadow. (Approved, 13 Apr 1944)



420 Air Refueling Squadron emblem approved, 20 Sep 1955

420 Flight Test Flight emblem approved, 22 May 1996

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Replacement training unit, Jun 1943-Mar 1944. Air refueling operations, 1954-1964. Tested and evaluated B-2 aircraft, 1989-1997.

The 420 Flight Test Flight, which operated out of the Williams-Gateway Airport in Mesa, Ariz., will close its doors for good Oct. 31. The unit supported the T-38C avionics upgrade program by flying depot-level test sorties and acceptance check flights after the cockpit upgrades were completed. In addition, pilots would pick up aircraft and bring them to Mesa for upgrade at a Boeing facility and then deliver them after the work was complete. "The avionics modification involved a total overhaul of all the flight, engine and navigational instruments, and the complete rewiring of all components forward of the rear cockpit," said Lt. Col. Tom Saxon, 420 FLTF commander. "The work took about 800 man-hours and six weeks to complete. The overall training platforms were improved by the addition of a heads-up display, inertial navigation system, and flight recorder and debrief system." The update is expected to extend the life of each Talon about 20 years. Members of the unit validated the modifications, valued at \$450 million, on 468 aircraft. "This process involved approximately 1,000 flight test missions, 2,400 delivery sorties and the oversight of 375,000 maintenance man-hours in our contractor oversight program," Colonel Saxon said. "We have accomplished this mission ahead of schedule every month for the past seven years, under our budget and without a mishap." The unit was originally stood up in May 2000 and organized as the 622nd Regional Support Group, Operating Location E. After the 413th Flight Test Group was created at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., the unit was renamed and activated under the group in August 2001. Since the unit was

formed to support work done under a fixed contract, everyone knew that someday the end would come. "As the unit deactivates, we have found jobs for those who desire them," Colonel Saxon said. "Some have joined the individual mobilization augmentee forces, some moved to other units within the flight test group, and some are retiring after 20-plus years of service."  
2007

The 420 Flight Test Squadron was activated following an assumption of command ceremony at Edwards Air Force Base, Oct. 4. The squadron will plan, test, analyze and report on all flight and ground testing of the B-21 Raider.

The 420 FLTS is organized under the 412th Test Wing, which is part of the Air Force Test Center, headquartered at Edwards AFB. The squadron, along with the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office, will ensure the Air Force delivers this asymmetric capability to the warfighter.

The B-21 will be a highly survivable, next-generation bomber with the ability to penetrate modern air defenses and hold any target at risk globally. The program, which has a mature and stable design, is transitioning to manufacturing development of the first test aircraft in Palmdale, California.

"The first flight of the Raider will take it from Palmdale to Edwards AFB, where the legacy of excellence will continue with the reactivation of the 420 Flight Test Squadron," said Acting Secretary of the Air Force Matthew Donovan, during the Air Force Association's Air, Space and Cyber Conference, Sept. 16.

This legacy of excellence began July 17, 1989, when the B-2 Spirit, the world's first stealth bomber, took off from Northrop Grumman's production facility at Plant 42 in Palmdale and landed 112 minutes later at Edwards AFB for developmental testing by the 420 FLTS. 2019



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USAF Unit Histories  
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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.  
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.  
Unit yearbook. *Alexandria AFB, LA, 366 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 1954. Army and Navy Publishing Co, Inc. Baton Rouge, LA. 1954*  
Unit yearbook. *Sculthorpe RAF Station, England, 1957 in England, United States Air Force Sculthorpe, Norfolk. 1957.*