

917 FIGHTER GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

917 Operations Group and activated in the Reserve established, 1 Aug 1992
Redesignated 917 Fighter Group, 1 Jn 2011
Inactivated, 2013

STATIONS

Barksdale AFB, LA, 1 Aug 1992

ASSIGNMENTS

917 Fighter Wing (later, 917 Wing), 1 Aug 1992
442 Fighter Wing

WEAPON SYSTEMS

A-10, 1992
B-52, 1993

COMMANDERS

Col Jack C. Ihle, 1 Aug 1992
Col Jimmie G. Mills, 2 May 1993
Col Ozzie Gorbitz
Col Keith Schultz, Mar 2010 - Jan 2011

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

2 Jul 1993-1 Jul 1995

1 Oct 1997-30 Sep 1999

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIO

Trained to conduct close air support and battlefield interdiction. Provided A-10 fighter training for reserve pilots until 1 Oct 1993 and after Oct 1996.

Deployed A-10s and personnel to Italy to support NATO operations in the Balkans, 1993-1996.

When the 917th Wing was deactivated here Jan. 8, it did not signal the end of the 917th designation because the wing's 917th Operations Group was redesignated as the 917th Fighter Group. In a ceremony presided over by Lt. Gen. Charles E. Stenner Jr., commander of Air Force Reserve Command, the flag of the 917th Fighter Group was uncased, formally redesignating it as an A-10 unit. Col. Eric Overturf, commander of the 442nd Fighter Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., accepted the new flag from General Stenner. The new fighter group is now part of the 442nd FW. "I'm proud to be your commander," said Colonel Overturf to the Airmen of the 917th FG. "Make no mistake ... You can rest assured when the nation calls on the 917th for airpower, we'll answer the call, and we'll be ready."

The 917th Wing flag was furled and encased, thus signifying the end of the wing's mission and serving as a final symbol of closure for all those, past and present, who were a part of the wing. The A-10 close-air-support aircraft previously assigned to the 917th WG will remain at Barksdale. The fighter group will be assigned to the 442nd Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and will be gained by Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, Va.

"We're losing the A-10s to Whiteman, but they'll still be here. We will still support them, but we are focusing on the bombers," said Brig. Gen. John J. Mooney III, 307th Bomb Wing commander and former commander of the 917th Wing. The 917th Wing started in 1963 at Barksdale as a troop carrier. General Stenner noted that its lineage has changed over the years, but the unit has never deactivated. He said members of the unit, past and present, can be proud of what they have achieved and will continue to achieve.

Airmen at Barksdale AFB, La., and members of the local community gathered to bid farewell to the last three A-10 ground-attack airplanes operating there with Air Force Reserve Command's 917th Fighter Group, according to a base release. Their late-June departure marked the beginning of the end for the group, which is slated for inactivation in late September.

"While today is somewhat sad as we are going to fly the last Barksdale A-10s to their new home, today really is about celebrating the impact of the 917th," said Col. John Breazeale, the group's commander, in the release on June 24, the day the airplanes left. The unit relinquished its A-10s as part of the Air Force's Fiscal 2013 force structure changes. Despite Barksdale losing its A-10s, Breazeale said he's optimistic looking ahead.

"I am excited about the future of Reserve operations at Barksdale and look forward to bringing a number of 917th FG members on board as we continue to define the future of B-52 operations across the enterprise," he said. AFRC's 307th Bomb Wing operates the Air Force's sole B-52 schoolhouse at Barksdale and supports the B-52 operations of the base's Active Duty 2nd BW. 2013

The departure of the base's final three A-10s, belonging to the Air Force Reserve's 917th Fighter Group, came about three months before the group is scheduled to be inactivated. With the inactivation in late September, the group's 50-year run at Barksdale will come to an end. The inactivation was included as part of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. Airmen and members of the community gathered on the flight line to say goodbye to the A-10s in a farewell ceremony. The aircraft will have a new home at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

"While today is somewhat sad as we are going to fly the last Barksdale A-10s to their new home, really today is about celebrating the impact of the 917th," said Col. John Breazeale, the group's commander. "Today is about the thousands of 917th Airmen and their service to our nation." The 917th was originally formed Jan. 17, 1963, at Barksdale as the 917th Troop Carrier Group assigned to the 435th Troop Carrier Wing. Its mission was to administer and support its assigned 78th Troop Carrier Squadron, which was equipped with C-124s.

Breazeale said the 917th has much to be proud of. "Today we celebrate the Airmen who activated the group in 1963," he said. "I guarantee they had no idea what the next 50 years would bring, for Barksdale or the 917th. Today we celebrate the hundreds of lives saved or protected by 917th Airmen over the skies in Bosnia in the 1990s and, most recently, in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. "The 917th FG proudly served our nation at Barksdale and deployed locations for over 50 years. It has been an honor to be a part of Team Barksdale and the local community." "The departure of the last three A-10s was a sad event for me and for the Reserve," said Col. Jonathan Ellis, 307th Bomb Wing commander.

"The A-10 Thunderbolts have been a fixture in the skies over the community for decades, and the unit closure will have a deep impact on all the Reserve family. The 307th Bomb Wing team stands ready to lend a hand in whatever fashion we can to make the transition for the fighter group as smooth as possible." Though this is the end of the A-10 era at Barksdale, Ellis is ready for the future. "I am excited about the future of Reserve operations at Barksdale and look forward to bringing a number of 917th FG members on board as we continue to define the future of B-52 operations across the enterprise," he said.

After 50 years of operation, the 917th Fighter Group was inactivated during a ceremony at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., Sept. 26. The ceremony marked the end of an era at Barksdale, as Airmen and community members gathered in the 917th FG hangar to watch as the unit guidon was furled and cased. "What a glorious day to honor 50 years of the 917th's service to our nation," said Col. John Breazeale, 917th FG commander.

"We wrap up 50 years of 917th service to our nation by honoring the thousands of 917th Airmen for their service and the proud heritage and legacy they built. Today is about you and your contribution to our nation." The inactivation was part of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. In 2006, as a result of a base realignment and closure action, the 917th WG gained eight A-10 aircraft and a number of full-time and part-time positions from the closure of Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, bringing the total A-10s assigned to 26. On Jan. 1, 2011, the 917th WG was inactivated, and the 917th Operations Group was redesignated as the 917th FG. The group realigned under the 442nd FW at Whiteman AFB, Mo.

The 917th FG included the 917th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 917th Maintenance Squadron, 917th Operations Support Flight and 917th Maintenance Operations Flight. The final three A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft from the 917th FG, 47th Fighter Squadron, departed Barksdale June 24 for their new home at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. "I salute and say thank you to the Airmen of the 917th FG, past and present, for their impact on our great nation," Breazeale said. "This unit will be inactivated today, but the triumphs of the 917th will be remembered forever."
2013

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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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.