A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND ITS ANTECEDENTS OCTOBER 1908 - 2008

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- 6 October 1918. 2nd Lt. Erwin R. Bleckley, a Kansas Guardsman flying as an aircraft observer in France with the 50th Aero Squadron of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), was killed while trying to locate and resupply the famous "lost battalion" of American infantry that had been cut off by the Germans in the Argonne Forrest. Both Bleckley and his pilot, 1st Lt. Harold E. Goettler, were awarded Medals of Honor posthumously. Bleckley was the first National Guard aviator to be a recipient of the nation's highest award for valor.¹
- **22 October 1918**. 1st Lt. Martinus Stenseth, a former Minnesota National Guardsman, was credited with 3.14 aerial victories bringing his total to 6.14. He ended World War I with 6.47 kills.²
- **15 October 1941**. The last of the National Guard's 29 pre World War II aviation units, Mississippi's 153rd Observation Squadron, was called into federal service. Altogether, approximately 4,800 National Guard aviation personnel, including 613 pilots, were mobilized during 1940-1941 from the Guard's flying units. Units of the National Guard's flying units.
- **October 1949**. The National Guard Bureau authorized the creation of an Air section in each state National Guard headquarters.⁵
- 10 October 1950. The first ANG units were mobilized during the Korean War. This was seen as a temporary expedient by the Air Force which planned to demobilize them by April 1951.⁶ Flying squadrons called up on that date were the: 11th Fighter Squadron (FS), Texas; 112th Bomb Squadron (Light), Ohio; 125th FS, Oklahoma; 127th FS, Kansas; 128th FBS, Georgia; 154th FS, Arkansas; 156th FS, North Carolina; 157th FS, South Carolina; 158th FS, Georgia; 159th FS, Florida; 160th FS, Alabama; 165th FS Kentucky; 167th Fighter Bomber Squadron (FBS), West Virginia; 182nd FS, Texas; and the 196th FBS, California.⁷ All of those units were assigned to the Tactical Air Command.⁸
- **11-21 October 1950**. Upon mobilization because of the Korean War, the 165th Fighter Squadron (FS), Kentucky ANG, 167th FS, West Virginia ANG, and the 154th FS, North Carolina ANG, were consolidated at Goodman Field,

Fort Knox, Kentucky as the 123rd Fighter Group. The unit trained F-51 replacement pilots for combat in Korea, provided firepower demonstrations, and performed tactical support missions for the Army.⁹

23 October 1951. Captain John W. Shewmaker, a Kentucky ANG pilot assigned to the 111th Fighter Bomber Squadron on a temporary basis, was killed while flying a bomber escort mission over North Korea. ¹⁰

1 October 1954. On this date, nine additional ANG fighter squadrons joined the original eight Air Guard fighter units that had begun standing air defense runway alert on a permanent basis on 15 August 1954. Each of the squadrons provided two aircraft on five-minute alert from dawn to dusk.¹¹

October 1954. The National Guard Association of the United States formally requested that strategic airlift units be organized in the ANG. Although that request was rejected by the Air Force, it marked the beginning of a long term effort by Guard interests to diversify its force structure because municipal airports hosting ANG units either could not or would not allow conversion to jet fighters as well as concerns that changing technology, doctrine, national security requirements, and the costs of modernizing its aging fighter and lighter bomber force would place the ANG's flying unit force structure at risk. At that time most ANG units flew fighters. A handful operated B-26s.¹²

October 1957. Because the Air Force could not provide adequate training facilities to meet all of the ANG's needs, the latter opened the "Air National Guard Jet Instrument School" at Ellington AFB, Texas. The school was staffed by Air Guardsmen.¹³

20-30 October 1958. Flying North American F-86D all-weather interceptors, a team from the Florida Air National Guard's 125th Fighter Interceptor Squadron won top honors at the Air Force's "William Tell" worldwide air-to-air gunnery meet at Tyndall AFB, Florida. Col. Robert Dawson of the 125th fired a perfect score of 39,600 points making him the highest scoring pilot in the competition.¹⁴

October 1960. An unidentified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent visited Brig. Gen. George R. Doster, commander of the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Alabama ANG at his headquarters in Birmingham. He won Doster's support to recruit Alabama Air Guardsmen as civilian contractors to train Cuban exiles to fly and maintain B-26s for a planned secret invasion of Cuba to overthrow Fidel Castro's communist regime. After negotiations between the Pentagon and the CIA, the 117th was offered the opportunity to assist the secret CIA operation because it had flown RB-26s until it converted

to Republic RF-84Fs on 1 May 1957. 15

1 October 1961. Over 21,000 Air Guardsmen called into federal service by President Kennedy's order to deal with the Berlin crisis reported to their units. Mobilized Air Guard units included: 18 tactical fighter squadrons, 4 tactical reconnaissance squadrons, 6 air transport squadrons, and a tactical air control group.¹⁶

October 1962. During the Cuban Missile crisis, volunteer ANG aircrews and C-97s augmented global Air Force operations flying 29 special assignment airlift missions. Although not mobilized, 14 ANG fighter units were placed on accelerated training programs and prepared for possible "no notice" deployments. In addition, 26 ANG bases hosted Air Force B-47E, F-101B, F-102A, and F-106A aircraft which had been disbursed to them during the emergency.¹⁷

October 1963. Capt. Russell L. Schweickart, an F-86 pilot in the Massachusetts ANG's 102nd Tactical Fighter Group and a civilian research scientist at MIT's Experimental Astronomy Laboratory, was selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to be an astronaut. He was the first astronaut to be selected directly from the Air Reserve Forces. ¹⁸

17 October 1966. At the 88th General Conference of the National Guard Association of the United States, held in Phoenix, Arizona, Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown lauded the operational contributions of the Air Guard in non-mobilized status to the Air Force's ongoing missions. He stressed that "No longer do we regard the Guard as simply a standby force. For some time we have been conceiving of it as an actual 'in-being' supplement to the Regular forces, even while it holds its reserve status. Mission areas for the Guard, therefore, are designed not only a training function but also to make a positive day-to-day contributions to the Active Forces." ¹⁹

October 1967. Senior officers at the National Guard Bureau decided to establish an Air National Guard NCO Academy on a permanent basis at McGee-Tyson ANG Base, Tennessee near Knoxville. Several existing buildings on the installation were repaired or altered to accommodate the Academy's staff and students.²⁰

October 1971. Members of the California Air Guard's 146th Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) employed the new Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS), mounted in one of the unit's C-130s, against the Romero fire in the Las Padres National Forest. It was the first time that the MAFFS had been used to combat a forest fire. After the U.S. Forest Service purchased MAFFS in 1974, the 146th TAW, the Wyoming ANG's 153rd Tactical Airlift Group (TAG),

and North Carolina's 145^{th} TAG plus an Air Force Reserve unit were equipped with the system. ²¹

1 October 1979. Massachusetts ANG personnel assisted civil authorities in Boston during the visit of Pope John Paul II to the city. Members of the 104th Tactical Fighter Group assisted along the Pope's motorcade route and at the Boston Common where a mass was celebrated.²²

October 1983. Seventeen volunteers from the Pennsylvania ANG's 193rd Special Operations Squadron flew an EC-130 Combat Solo aircraft to participate in Operation Urgent Fury, the U.S. invasion of Grenada. In addition, two ANG KC-135s of the Arkansas Air Guard's 189th Air Refueling Group refueled an E-3A AWACS and an F-15 fighter enroute to Grenada for that military action.²³

17 October 1989. After a massive earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale rocked the San Francisco Bay area, 16,599 California National Guardsmen, including 487 members of the Air Guard, were activated for relief operations which continued through 12 February 1990. Within an hour after the quake struck, members of the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, based at Naval Air Station Moffett Field near San Jose, flew damage assessment missions over stricken areas in an HC-130 and an HH-3 helicopter. The 143rd Evacuation Hospital was set up at Travis AFB. Members of the 162nd Combat Communications Group rigged floodlights along the collapsed section of Interstate 80 in Oakland so rescuers could work around the clock. The 234th Combat Communications Squadron activated the unit's mobile control tower so that its hometown Watsonville Airport could operate around the clock.

30 October 1991. Pararescue specialist SSgt. Rick Smith of the New York Air Guard's 106th Rescue Wing was lost when his HH-60 Pavehawk helicopter was forced to ditch in the Atlantic because unexpectedly high winds during a monstrous storm had made it impossible to refuel his aircraft. The ANG helicopter and crew were retuning from an aborted attempt to save a civilian on a sinking sailboat 250 miles off New Jersey's coast. The other members of the helicopter's crew survived and were rescued by a Coast Guard cutter. The episode was documented in Sebastian Junger's best selling book, *The Perfect Storm*.²⁵

October 1991. After a 36-hour struggle to get pararescuemen to the crash site, the combined efforts of the Alaska Air Guard's 210th Rescue Squadron and rescue specialists from the Canadian Forces saved 13 of 18 Canadian military personnel whose C-130 had gone down during a blizzard in that nation's Northwest Territories.²⁶

- **22 October 1992**. Astronaut and Texas Air Guard fighter pilot Charles Lacy Veach served as a mission specialist on the Space Shuttle *Columbia* (STS-52) which was launched into orbit on this day. It was his second space flight. The *Columbia* landed safely on 1 November 1992.²⁷
- **3-4 October 1993.** During the "Battle of Mogadishu" in Somalia, a deployed Air Guard Mobile Aeromedical Staging Facility triaged and provided life support to more than 55 soldiers and evacuated over 65 patients.²⁸
- **16 October 1993**. Astronaut David A. Wolf, a former flight surgeon in the 181st Tactical Fighter Group, Indiana ANG, was launched into orbit on the space shuttle *Columbia* (STS-58), a dedicated Spacelab life sciences research mission. The shuttle returned safely to earth on 1 November 1993.²⁹
- **25 October 1993.** Col. Irene Trowell-Harris, a nurse in the New York ANG, became the Air Guard's first African-American woman promoted to the rank of brigadier general.³⁰
- 17 October 1994. Col. Verna D. Fairchild of the Kentucky ANG was promoted to brigadier general and became her state's Assistant Adjutant General. She was the first woman to hold that assignment in any state.³¹
- **1 October 1995.** Federal recognition was granted to the 137th Space Warning Squadron, Colorado ANG. It was the Air Guard's first space unit.³²
- 1 October 1995. The last RF-4C was phased out of the ANG inventory at the 152nd Reconnaissance Group, Reno, Nevada. That marked the end of dedicated manned tactical reconnaissance aircraft in the total Air Force. On that same date, the ANG delivered the first F-16 reconnaissance pod which enabled the Guard to continue providing 100 percent of the Air Force's manned tactical reconnaissance capabilities. The 192nd Fighter Wing at Richmond, Virginia was the lead unit for the development and use of the pod.³³
- **1 October 1997**. Effective this date, First Air Force officially completed the transition to manning by the ANG, replacing active duty Air Force personnel.³⁴
- 13 October 1997. C-130Hs carrying personnel from Wyoming's 153rd Airlift Wing departed Cheyenne to fight stubborn wildfires in Indonesia. Two of the aircraft were equipped with the Modular Airborne Firefighting System. The unit flew 215 sorties and logged 316.5 flying hours during its deployment to Indonesia.³⁵
- **27 October 1998**. Hurricane Mitch, one of the deadliest Atlantic storms in the 20th century, devastated Central America leaving an estimated 9,000

people dead in Honduras and almost one million homeless. In response to the enormous needs created by the storm, Air Guard crews and C-130s from Arkansas, California, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island delivered relief supplies to Honduras during "Operation Amigo" which lasted several months.³⁶

- **October 1998**. The National Guard Bureau formed 10 new joint Army Guard and Air Guard regional Rapid Assessment and Initial Detection (RAID) teams in 10 states to help civilian authorities detect and assess chemical, biological and nuclear hazards from terror weapons.³⁷
- 1 October 1999. The ANG and the Air Force Reserve were integrated with the active duty Air Force in the service's new Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF). The Air Force began implementing its EAF concept as the first of its 10 Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) began deploying overseas. This was known as AEF Cycle 1. The ANG had agreed to supply 10 percent of the planes and personnel for each AEF. 39
- 16 October 1999. A crew and LC-130 from the New York Air Guard's 109th Airlift Wing flew a six-and-a-half, 1,680 mile roundtrip in bitter cold weather from New Zealand to the Antarctic coast and back to evacuate Dr. Jeri Nielsen, the only physician at the National Science Foundation (NSF) research mission, because she had found a lump in her breast. It may have been the earliest flight following winter in the 70-year history of the NSF program. The flight took place two weeks earlier than the scheduled resumption of flights which had been terminated for the winter on 15 February 1999.⁴⁰
- **2 October 2001**. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld announced that President George W. Bush had nominated Maj. Gen. Daniel James III, the Adjutant General of Texas, to be the next Director of the Air National Guard. If confirmed by the Senate, he would serve in the rank of lieutenant general.⁴¹
- **7 October 2001**. The Bush administration launched a war against Afghanistan because its government had harbored the Al Qaeda terrorist organization that had planned and conducted the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the U.S. The operation, which involved significant numbers of Air Guardsmen from the outset, was named Enduring Freedom.⁴²
- **8 October 2001**. Four EC-130E Commando Solo aircraft from the Pennsylvania ANG's 193rd Special Operations Wing began broadcasting music and information to the Afghan people as part of Operation Enduring Freedom⁴³
- **17 October 2001**. Elements of the 186th Air Refueling Wing (ARW), Mississippi ANG, and the 117th ARW, Alabama, formed a composite unit at

Incirlick AB, Turkey to support Operation Enduring Freedom. The two air refueling wings switched lead unit status every 90 days.⁴⁴

October 2002. The 201st Airlift Squadron, District of Columbia ANG, began flying members of Congress and other government officials around the world on the unit's two newly-acquired C-40 transports, a military version of Boeing's 737 airliner.⁴⁵

October 2003. Six Air National Guard C-130s and two Air Force Reserve Command C-130s equipped with Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS) flew 48 missions dropping 129,600 gallons of fire retardant on fires in the blazing Simi Valley countryside of Southern California after those conflagrations grew too large for ground-based firefighters and civilian aircraft to handle. Altogether, 10 separate wild fires in Southern California consumed more than 745,000 acres and destroyed over 3,400 homes during that month.⁴⁶

12 October 2006. In ceremonies at Langley AFB, Virginia, the 119th Fighter Wing, North Dakota ANG, deactivated its air sovereignty alert (ASA) detachment at that installation and the 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont ANG, assumed that responsibility. The 119th was transitioning from F-16s to the Predator Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and C-21 Lear jet missions.⁴⁷

October 2007. The Kansas ANG's 184th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) became an intelligence wing specializing in computer systems security and satellite surveillance monitoring. The unit flew its final KC-135 mission in September 2007 ending 60 years of operating manned aircraft.⁴⁸

NOTES

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