

# WEAPONS SQUADRON ACTIVATION CEREMONIES – 2003

On 3 February 2003, 12 divisions of the USAF Weapons School formally became squadrons. Each of the 12 new squadrons received the designation of a previously deactivated unit. On 21 February 2003 a ceremony commemorating the activation was held. The Low Observable divisions of the Weapons School were officially redesignated as Weapons Squadrons on 13 August 2003 with the activation of the 715<sup>th</sup> (B-2) and 417<sup>th</sup> (F-117) Weapons Squadrons. Below is a summary of the proud history of each new USAF Weapons School squadron.

## **8<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (Command and Control Operations)**

The Weapons School Command and Control Division was activated as the Air Weapons Controller Division on 21 June 1984. The initial syllabus focused on training weapons officers for Airborne Warning and Control System and Ground Theater Air Control System units. In 1995 the division was redesignated as the Command and Control Operations Division, expanding its scope to include training weapons officers for the RC-135 RIVET JOINT, EC-130H COMPASS CALL and, in the year 2000, the E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System communities. All told, the 8<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron has graduated 252 Weapons Officers who have been involved in every one of our nation's conflicts since 1985. The 8<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron inherited the lineage of the 8<sup>th</sup> Airborne Command and Control Squadron. The 8<sup>th</sup>'s history includes flying cargo aircraft to supply people and munitions around the South Pacific during WWII. Known then as the 8<sup>th</sup> Combat Cargo Squadron, the unit's C-46s and C-47s likely shared "ramp space" with the 433rd Fighter Squadron's (now the F-15C Weapons Squadron) P-38s in New Guinea and the Philippines in 1944 and 1945. At the time of its inactivation at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma on 15 May 1996, the 8<sup>th</sup> Airborne Command and Control Squadron flew the EC-135 to provide airborne command and control for deploying fighter squadrons over the Atlantic Ocean, and supporting the movement of key Air Combat Command leadership.

## **14<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (Special Operations Forces)**

The Weapons School Special Operations Forces (SOF) Division first activated as Detachment 1, AFSOC/DO on 15 March 2000 at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The unit designation was changed to Detachment 1, 16 Operations Group on 10 August 2000 to align it with the group charged with providing aircraft and personnel who would help build the course. The first two courses, the MH-53 and AC-130, were formally approved in December 2000 and the detachment was recognized as the 12<sup>th</sup> division of the Weapons School. In August 2002, the unit was transferred from Air Force Special Operations Command to Air Combat Command and became Detachment 3, USAF Weapons School. In December 2002, a third course, the MC-130, was formally approved. Thus far, the division has graduated 39 Weapons Officers representing 6 different major weapons systems. The SOF Division was redesignated as the 14<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron. The 14<sup>th</sup> traces its lineage back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Observation Squadron and participated in the landings at Normandy in June 1944. Later it was reactivated during the Vietnam era as the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Commando Squadron, flying AC-47 SPOOKY gunships between 1967 and 1968. The 14<sup>th</sup> flew out of Nha Trang, Phan Rang, Bien Hoa, and Binh Thuy, providing fire support in defense of US airbases, Special Forces Camps, Republic of Vietnam Army outposts, and South Vietnamese hamlets. Decorations of this combat unit include the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, and the AF Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device.

## **16<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (F-16C)**

The Weapons School F-16 Division was activated in October of 1980 and to date has graduated 317 F-16 Weapons Officers and continues to produce 20 graduates each year. The F-16 Division was redesignated as the 16<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron, which began as the 16<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron on 20 November 1940. During World War II, the 16<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron flew missions in New Guinea, India, and China in the P-40, P-47, and P-51. During the Korean War, the 16<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Interceptor Squadron flew missions from Korea and Japan in the F-80 and F-86. After the Korean War, the 16<sup>th</sup> was stationed in Japan, Florida, Norway, Turkey, Korea, and Utah, flying missions in the F-106, F-4, and F-16A aircraft. On 30 June 1986, the 16<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron was inactivated. The last missions the 16<sup>th</sup> flew were F-16A Replacement Training Unit missions at Hill AFB, Utah. The 16<sup>th</sup>

Weapons Squadron Emblem is symbolic of the squadron and its mission. The TOMAHAWK is slashed into a red and black American Indian Ceremonial Stake to signify readiness for combat.

### **17<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (F-15E)**

The Weapons School F-15E Division was activated on 8 July 1991 and has gone on to produce 107 F-15E Weapons Officers. The F-15E Division was redesignated the 17<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron and traces its lineage to the 17<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron. The 17<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron was activated in August 1917 and earned 13 Campaign Streamers in World War I flying the SOPWITH CAMEL. During World War II, the 17<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron participated in the defense of the Philippines flying the P-40 and garnering the first American Ace of World War II. The squadron went on to participate in the Vietnam conflict flying F-105F WILD WEASELS, and Operation DESERT STORM flying the F-16C. The 17<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron was inactivated at Shaw AFB in December 1993. The 17<sup>th</sup> patch, adopted in 1917, consists of a Great White Snowy Owl in front of a black triangle with a blue background. Because of its distinctive Owl Patch, the squadron's nickname is the "HOOTERS."

### **19<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (Intel)**

The Weapons School Intelligence Division entered the Weapons School in 1989 and has graduated over 150 Weapons Officers. The squadron has two syllabi, the Intelligence Weapons Instructor Course and the Intelligence Sensor Weapons Instructor Course, and a flight that supports mission planning for 17,000 sorties annually. The 19<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron assumes the lineage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron, activated 5 February 1942, redesignated the 19<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron on 17 June 1963 and inactivated on 1 October 1993. The 19<sup>th</sup> originally flew antisubmarine missions during WWII, then moved to China in 1944 to begin observation missions in support of Chinese ground forces and later flew resupply missions to resistance forces operating behind enemy lines in French Indochina. From 1963 through 1968 the 19<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron flew forward air support and observation missions over Vietnam until its mission was transferred to Osan AB, South Korea in 1972, where it provided Eighth US Army and Republic of Korea ground forces with aerial reconnaissance and close air support until inactivated in October 1993.

### **34<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (HH-60G)**

The Weapons School HH-60G Division had its beginning with the establishment of the USAF Combat Rescue School at Nellis AFB in 1993. In 1995 Air Combat Command consolidated the mission of the Rescue School within the 57<sup>th</sup> Wing. On 7 July 1995, the HH-60G Division of the USAF Weapons School was activated. The HH-60G Division was redesignated the 34<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron and assumes the lineage of the 34<sup>th</sup> Air Rescue Squadron, which was activated on 17 October 1952 at Kadena AB, Okinawa, Japan. The 34<sup>th</sup> ARS flew the SB-17, a rescue version of the B-17 bomber from WWII, and was tasked with search and airdrop missions. The SB-17 dropped wooden boats and parajumpers to recover lost aircrew. The 34<sup>th</sup> was inactivated on 8 September 1954. The 34<sup>th</sup> was well known for participation in the "DUCKBUTT" mission of holding rescue and recovery orbits to assist damaged or lost aircraft recovering to Japan after missions during the Korean War. The 34<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron has graduated 48 Weapons Officers since July 1993.

### **57<sup>th</sup> Weapons Support Squadron (Support)**

The Weapons School Support Division was activated in October 1997. The Support Division was redesignated as the 57<sup>th</sup> Weapons Support Squadron and assumes its lineage from the 57<sup>th</sup> Training Support Squadron originally activated on 1 November 1991. In this unit's short history it has been responsible for helping guide some of the most far-reaching changes in Weapon School history. These included the complete renovation of the two main Weapon School buildings, upgrading all Weapons School briefing, debriefing, and academic rooms, and adding state-of-the-art video equipment; completion of a new Adversary Support facility; transfer of a significant portion of Weapons School academic instruction to contract support; implementation of the Tactical Aircrew Scheduling and Maintenance System which automates the daily flying schedule for the Weapons School's flying squadrons; and the design of a "Weapons School 2007" military construction plan that will, over the next five years, expand Weapons School facilities to include a new library, auditorium, secured working areas for all Weapons School squadrons, and the eventual culmination of the F/A-22 Weapons School beddown.

### **66<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (A-10)**

The Weapons School A-10 Division was first activated as the 66<sup>th</sup> Fighter Weapons Squadron on 1 October 1977. When the Fighter Weapons School reorganized in 1981, the 66<sup>th</sup> FWS was redesignated as the A-10 Division. It

has transitioned back to its heritage as the 66<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron. The 66<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron traces its lineage back to the 66<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, which was activated on 14 November 1940. During World War II, the 66<sup>th</sup> flew missions in North Africa and Italy flying P-40 and P-47 aircraft. After the war, the unit transferred to Alaska under the Alaskan Air Command, flying P-51, F-80, F-84 and F-89 aircraft until the unit was inactivated in 1957. During the Vietnam War, the 66<sup>th</sup> was reactivated under the 57<sup>th</sup> Fighter Weapons Wing at Nellis AFB, and trained F-105 and F-4C WILD WEASEL Weapons Officers until it was inactivated in 1975. The 66<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron has graduated 308 A-10 Weapons Officers since 1977.

### **77<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (B-1B)**

The Weapons School B-1 Division was activated on 28 August 1992 and to date has graduated 135 Weapons Officers. The division was redesignated as the 77<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron, which receives its lineage from the 77<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, activated on 15 January 1941 at Fort Douglas, Utah. After combat operations in the Pacific theater during World War II, the 77<sup>th</sup> contributed to America's nuclear deterrent during the Cold War and formed the backbone of the Air Force's B-52 force during the Vietnam conflict. Following B-1 combat operations in Operation ALLIED FORCE, the 77<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron inactivated in August 2002 at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota.

### **328<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (Space)**

The Weapons School Space Division was activated in July 1996 and has graduated 123 Weapons Officers. The Space Division was redesignated as the 328<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron, which receives its lineage from the 328<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) activated on 28 January 1942. The 328<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its gallantry during the raid on the Ploesti, Romania oil refineries during August of 1943. The 328<sup>th</sup> flew the B-24, B-29, B-47, B-50, and B-52G until it was inactivated on 15 June 1994.

### **340<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (B-52H)**

The Weapons School B-52 Division was originally activated on 1 October 1989 as the Strategic Weapons School, graduating the first class in April 1990. In 1992, with the activation of Air Combat Command, the B-52 Division was reborn as part of the USAF Weapons School, eventually becoming Detachment 2, USAF Weapons School. The 340<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron was reactivated as the 340<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron, USAF Weapons School. The 340<sup>th</sup> has graduated 204 B-52 Weapons Officers. On 3 February 1942, Captain Paul Tibbets (of Enola Gay fame) was given command of a new squadron that would later become the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron. The 340<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron was involved in combat missions in both the European and Mediterranean theaters from 1942 through 1945. The most notable of these were the raids on Hitler's largest oil refinery in Ploesti, Romania. Crews from the 340<sup>th</sup> BS participated in the LINEBACKER offensives over the skies of North Vietnam. In August 1990 the 340<sup>th</sup> deployed aircrews for Operation DESERT STORM. After the war, the 340<sup>th</sup> was inactivated at Eaker AFB, AR on 1 April 1992.

### **417<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (F-117A)**

The Air Force Chief of Staff directed the creation of the F-117 Division of the Weapons School in May of 2002. The initial cadre class began in January of 2003, and the validation class began their training in July of 2003. On 13 August 2003, the F-117 Division was re-designated the 417<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron, which was originally activated as the 417<sup>th</sup> Night Fighter Squadron in 1943. During World War II, the squadron saw action in the European theater, flying both the British BEAUFIGHTER and the P-61 BLACK WIDOW. From 1953 to 1966, the squadron saw many activations and re-designations as it served at various European bases flying the F-51, F-86 and F-100. Lt Col Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager was one of the distinguished commanders of the unit during this time. In 1966 the unit transitioned to the F-4 and accomplished two combat deployments during the Vietnam War. The 417<sup>th</sup> continued to fly the F-4 until the squadron was again deactivated in 1977. The unit reactivated in 1989 as the 417<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, 37<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing at Tonopah Test Range in Nevada, responsible for the replacement training of new F-117A pilots. The squadron moved from Tonopah to Holloman AFB, NM in 1992, and was deactivated in 1994 when the squadron's people and mission were transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. The squadron's first F-117 graduates are scheduled to return to their units in December 2003.

### **433<sup>rd</sup> Weapons Squadron (F-15C)**

The Weapons School F-15C Division was borne of the 433<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Weapons Squadron when the USAF Fighter Weapons School redesignated each of its squadrons as “Divisions” in 1981. The 433<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron was first activated in May of 1943 and flew the P-38 in the Pacific Theater of Operations. The 433<sup>rd</sup> distinguished themselves in air combat against Japan over New Guinea, Rabaul, and the Philippines, achieving over 200 aerial victories. Returning to the United States, the 433<sup>rd</sup> was made part of the Air Defense Command and was inactivated at Minot AFB, North Dakota, in 1958. Reactivated in 1964 for the war in Southeast Asia, the 433<sup>rd</sup> was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing at Ubon, Thailand, where it flew the F-4. The 433<sup>rd</sup> again distinguished itself by becoming the number two leading MiG killing squadron in the war, scoring 12 kills over North Vietnam. Inactivated following the Vietnam War, the 433<sup>rd</sup> rose again in 1976 at Nellis AFB, Nevada as the 433<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Weapons Squadron flying the F-15, where it provided replacement training and validated the first F-15 Weapons Instructor Course in 1978. The 433<sup>rd</sup> Weapons Squadron has graduated over 300 Weapons Officers trained in the Combat Air Force’s most demanding air-to-air arena.

### **715<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron (B-2A)**

The B-2 Division at the Weapons School was activated in May 2002 and will graduate its first class of B-2 Weapons Officers in December 2003. The B-2 Division was officially redesignated as the 715<sup>th</sup> Weapons Squadron on 13 August 2003 and assumed the proud lineage of the 715<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron. The 715<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron was first activated on 6 April 1943 and saw its first combat in the European Theater of Operations over the skies of Germany in December of that year flying the B-24 LIBERATOR. In 1946 the 715<sup>th</sup> transitioned to the B-29 and was reassigned to the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group, the same organization that ended the war in the Pacific with the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan. The 715<sup>th</sup> continued service flying the B-29, B-50, and B-47 until it was deactivated in 1966. The 715<sup>th</sup> was reactivated in 1970 at Pease AFB as the first operational FB-111 squadron and continued in that role until it was again deactivated in 1990.

