

IN THE NEWS

Air National Guard defends the skies over the southeast

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

Four F-16A Fighting Falcon jets from the Minnesota Air National Guard were on alert Oct. 25 through Tuesday near the aero club here, guarding against unknown threats on the Southeast Coast of the United States.

Eighteen members of the 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn., used the vacant facilities to prove they can do their alert mission from a variety of deployed locations. The group normally sits 24-hour alert at Tyndall AFB, Fla., as a detachment of the 148 FW.

The detachment receives orders to identify unknown aircraft through command post channels from 1st Air Force at Tyndall and the North American Aerospace Defense Command. Only the Air National Guard has the Continental United States air defense mission, and Det. 1 is one of three fighter units that has responsibility for a quadrant of the Southeast Air Defense Sector.

With approximately 3,000 miles of coastline extending from Virginia to Texas, the Southeast Air Defense Sector is the busiest of the three sectors comprising the Continental United States North American Aerospace Defense Command Region, which is also headquartered at Tyndall. Three alert fighter units are stationed at four alert fighter sites strategically located to provide rapid scramble and subsequent interception and identification of the unknowns in any quadrant of the sector. The peacetime mission also includes detection and monitoring of suspected drug smuggling aircraft in

coordination with U.S. Customs Service and law enforcement agencies.

"We usually come down here once or twice a year, but sometimes it could be another guard unit that comes down instead," said Lt. Col. Mark Aldrich, 148 FW, Det. 1 commander. "We do the same mission here as we do back in Tyndall."

The F-16s can carry up to six air-to-air missiles, usually four radar-seeking Advance Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles and two heat-seeking Sidewinder missiles.

The F-16s were located in Bldg. 2030, aircraft maintenance hangars and offices, and Bldg. 2000. These facilities are maintained by two facility caretakers, Master Sergeants Patrick Burt and Edward Albright, both with the Southeast Air Defense Sector of the Florida Air National Guard, but stationed here permanently.

"We sit air sovereignty alerts and if an incoming aircraft can't be identified, then we will scramble to intercept them," Aldrich said. "We train for a five-minute response time from when the klaxon first goes off." He added the alerting process comes through the base command post channels.

"We've had outstanding support from the command post," said Aldrich.

Master Sgt. Michael Seemuth, an F-16 flight chief with the 148 FW, Det. 1, enjoys maintaining the F-16s, even if they are more than 20 years old.

"It's a fairly easy jet to maintain, and since I've been working on the same jets for about 16 years, it's easy to learn everything about each jet. In the guard, we tend to keep the jets so

long that we learn them inside and out."

He added that the jets have the improved Pratt and Whitney PW-220 engines, which are much easier to maintain. The jets, stationed at Tyndall, are rotated out with the jets at Duluth so scheduled and preventative maintenance can also be performed.

"The deployment to Charleston has been really nice, and it proves we can get the job done out of a deployed location if need be," said Seemuth. "We tend to go over the jets more often when they sit alert and they all get a daily inspection. One maintenance person is assigned with each aircraft while it's on alert. We give them a little more tender loving care."

"You have a lot of highly motivated folks at the alert facility. It takes a different breed of person to want to assume that responsibility and role. It's a little more stressful since there is more personal re-

sponsibility for alert duty crew chiefs than the regular line crew chief. When the aircraft has to go, it has got to go—no kidding," Seemuth said.

Burt said, "We've even used these facilities to hangar F-16s from Langley AFB when Hurricane Floyd threatened the Virginia area last year. We can bed down four F-16s and we can also handle F-15s at this facility."

The Vermont Air National Guard used to have a continuous presence with F-16s at Charleston until the unit alert commitment was deactivated in 1997.



Photo by Lt. Col. Ed Memi

Tech. Sgt. Dave Jackson, a weapons specialist for the 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn., checks a live heat-seeking AIM-9 Sidewinder missile. The 148 FW was deployed here Oct. 25 to Tuesday near the Aero Club hangar.

Don't let another year go up in smoke!



Are you a smoker who wants to quit?
You are in luck!

The Great American Smoke Out is Nov. 16, and the Health and Wellness Center is hosting a 1.75 mile Turkey Trot/Walk, 7:30-9:30 a.m., at the fitness trail (across from the gym). Participants are encouraged to come dressed like a turkey. The best costume will win a prize.

The center is also sponsoring the Adopt-A-Smoker Program, where a non-smoker adopts a smoker for an entire day. During that 24-hour time period, the goal is to prevent the adopted person from using tobacco products. All participants will receive an informational packet and free gifts. To participate in the Great American Smoke Out, obtain adoption papers for a smoker or to receive information about other prevention programs, call 963-4007.

CAFB ready for Native American Month

Commentary by
Tech. Sgt. Sherley Jones
437 Military Equal Opportunity

The month of November is designated by presidential proclamation, congressional legislation, and public law to recognize the many contributions and achievements of Native Americans.

Seventeen of 3,438 active duty Team Charleston members are listed as Native American. In the Air Force, Native Americans make up 1,628 of 351,103 active duty members.

Charleston AFB will spotlight a few of its Native Americans in the *Airlift Dispatch* later in the month.

Also, the base library is featuring a Native American-themed book display for the base community to enjoy.

Some highlights of the display include Marion Gridley's "American Indian Women," Margar Compton's "American Indian Fairy Tales," William Katz' "Black Indians," and Carl Waldman's "Who Was Who in Native America."

The Military Equal Opportunity office is seeking members to help formulate the Native American Heritage Council. Heritage councils organize events and activities to recognize the contributions and achievements of different ethnic groups in order to increase awareness, mutual respect and understanding among base personnel.

It's important to remember cultural awareness is a key to interpersonal relationships. Let's take time to educate ourselves and our fam-

ily members on the benefits of diversity.

For more information about Native American Month, or to join the heritage council, call the MEO office at 963-3655 or 963-3654.

