

AirScoop



104th Fighter Wing | www.104fw.ang.af.mil



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@104thfighterwing

From the Commander

Barnestormers,

Welcome to another drill weekend. During last month's wing expeditionary training at Naval Air Station Key West, we were able to accomplish some valuable integration with Eglin F-35s and get a glimpse of what the future holds for us here at the 104th. Now it is time for us to begin the important process of safely winding down our F-15C flying mission and preparing our iron for divestment to Fresno and New Orleans, where our sister units will continue Eagle operations. As exciting as the prospect of converting to our nation's premier fifth-generation fighter is, we cannot lose focus on the tremendous amount of work that it will take to set the conditions for a successful transition. It is going to take all of us being focused on continued readiness in our primary missions and a willingness to do things outside of our comfort zone to help us prepare. Make no mistake, this will be a whole-of-wing effort, and we trust that you are all up for the challenge.

While the change in airframe might be driving our mission focus, we want to ensure you all that it is not lost on us the number of additional changes you may be experiencing because of the change in administrations. We know that many of you are feeling the impacts of federal government reductions in force and / or hiring freezes. We know that many of you may be impacted by changes in the ways that some government funding or services may support local institutions. We know that many of you may have concerns about the ways that the full year continuing resolution may impact funding across the Department of Defense, the Air Force, and the Air National Guard. We hear you and promise to help you navigate the changing landscape as best we can. We won't have all the answers, and we don't have any way of predicting all the changes to come. But we want you to trust that we will continue to do all that we can for the entire Barnestormer family in line with our wing's vision, mission, priorities, and principles. Thank you for all that you continue to do for your communities and for your nation.

Shaggy

Andrew D. St. Jean, Colonel, MA ANG
Deputy Commander, 104th Fighter Wing



From the Command Chief

Welcome to drill, Barnestormers!

It's an exciting time to be a member of the 104th FW. We are in the midst of conversion from the F-15C to the F-35A, awaiting guidance on what the future of the AFFORGEN deployment cycle looks like, and anticipating the new wing structure as a Deployable Combat Wing. What does it all mean? That change is the new constant, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The unknown can be stressful, and it isn't lost on wing leadership how changes in the new administration, as well as these large-scale developments of our Air Force, can and have impacted our airmen, but with this uncertainty comes opportunity. Opportunity to improve facilities and base layout for F-35 success, opportunity to move into a more predictable deployment cycle for our formations, and opportunity to flatten communication and streamline the chain of command to increase efficiency and embrace the concept of mission command.

As we navigate these challenges, it's easy to let uncertainty distract us from our purpose. Now more than ever, it's crucial to focus on our priorities: ensuring readiness in our primary missions, developing our teammates professionally and personally, building enduring community partnerships, and fostering continuous improvement. Through this deliberate focus, we will not only endure change but emerge stronger and more prepared than ever. As the saying goes: Mission first, people always. It's the people here—all of you—who guarantee mission success. So embrace the change, trust in your training, and never stop striving for excellence.

Chief Gardner

Michael W. Gardner, Chief Master Sergeant, MA ANG
Command Chief, 104th Fighter Wing





TAKING TO THE SKIES

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY TECH. SGT. LEILANI PELTZ

Thirteen Airmen from the 104th Fighter Wing earned the opportunity to receive either a familiarization or an incentive ride during Exercise Ready Eagle 25-01 at NAS Key West, February and March 2025.

These flights provided Airmen a chance to experience what could be a once-in-a-lifetime ride while simultaneously recognizing their achievements. While incentive and familiarization flights can occur in a variety of aircraft, personnel for both flew in a two-seater F-15D Eagle. Flights in the Eagle were particularly special to unit members, as this was the final TDY with the fighter jets before the conversion to the F-35 in 2026.

Familiarization and incentive flights allow service members to be part of a specific training mission. Multiple members are involved to successfully complete rides, requiring communication between the pilots in the air and crews on the ground.

Capt. Joshua Carollo, a 104th Fighter Wing chaplain at Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield, Mass., was one of the Airmen who received an incentive flight after winning the wing's Company Grade Officer of the Year award for 2024.

Chaplain Carollo said he was excited for the chance to be in the air with Lt. Col. Matt 'Beast' Tanis, a 104th Fighter Wing pilot.

"The opportunity to fly in the F-15 Eagle and see the beautiful dance between pilot and machine was amazing," Carollo said. "I have a greater appreciation for both their role at the tip of the spear, as well as my own role supporting their mission."

The flight lasted around an hour-and-a-half, involved a few mission fights, and showcased the aircraft's high rates of speed.

"Beast said we pulled eight-plus Gs at least four times," Carollo said of his flight experience. "I was ready for the two dog fights, but when we started on the third, that was rough."

Senior Airman Logan St. Clair, a 104th Fighter Wing cyber network infrastructure technician at Barnes, was another Airman who had the opportunity for an incentive flight. He won the wing's Airman of the Year award for 2023.

Col. David 'Moon' Halasi-Kun, the 104th Fighter Wing commander, was the pilot for St. Clair's flight, but prior to finding out who was flying the F-15D, St. Clair was anxious.

"I hadn't heard about who my pilot was going to be, and all of the nerves were catching up," St. Clair said. "When I learned Col. Moon was taking me up, most of my fears went away."

St. Clair said his experience in the F-15 made him think of his grandfather, Colonel (retired) Robert St. Clair, who had been an A-10 Warthog pilot at Barnes.

"Going up was emotional for me," St. Clair said. "I enlisted shortly after my grandfather passed away, so it was cool to feel the same feeling he probably had all the time."

Being in the air provided St. Clair with a different viewpoint outside of his typical job.

"It showed me from a military perspective what the Communications Squadron and I are working to support," St. Clair said. "As a cyber person, we don't necessarily have the chance to interact with the pilots or know too much about the missions they go on, so I think it was great to see what they're doing on a day-to-day basis."

All individuals were acknowledged for their leadership, hard work and dedication within their respective shops. Each of the flights served as recognition of their contributions to the wing's mission and a morale boost for the unit, including to those who watched their fellow Airmen on the flights.

[VIEW THE GALLERY HERE](#)



HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



NEW 131FS COMMANDER



BEAST'S FINIFLIGHT



LRS SUPPORTS KEY WEST

HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



3D PRINTED INNOVATION



104th EOD STAYS READY



MDG READINESS RODEO

BARNESTORMER COMMUNITY



CADRE'S CORNER

Happy April Drill!

Our student flight will be working to support the Norwegian Foot March over the upcoming drill, along with an intelligence briefing and PT. Feel free to come motivate our future wingmen.

We also want to send best wishes to our Barnestormers heading to BMT in March:

Omer Senates	CPTF
Mariana Velez	FSS
Cal Atwater	MXS
Cody Lowe	MXS
Corby Marini	LRS
John Mburu	COMM
Festus Konneh	OPS

Aim High!
SSgt Ryan Carvalho
SSgt Mykel Potter



PROMOTIONS

2nd Lt. 1st Lt. Jared Piubeni	<u>MXA</u>
TSgt. MSgt. Hannah Graydon	<u>SFS</u>
TSgt. MSgt. Joseph King	<u>AMXS</u>
SrA SSgt. Paul Uhomoihi	<u>AMXS</u>
A1C SrA Zyiasia Knighton	<u>AMXS</u>
A1C SrA Blake Dufresne	<u>MDG</u>
Ann A1C Tisani Bristol	<u>MDG</u>
Ann A1C Brooke Bergevin	<u>MDG</u>

Congratulations!

RETIREMENTS AND DEPARTURES

TSgt. Erica Manos Sharpe
A-Staff | 25 Years

SMSgt. Kelly Collins
MDG | 24 Years

SMSgt. William Mclsaac
CS | 21 Years

CMSgt. Stephen Jeffers
104th Command Chief | 20 Years

Alexandria Baca
Heading to NY ANG | 15 Years

Cameron Reinhart
Heading to IN ANG | 7 Years

Krishna Patel
10 Years

Dalton Hardy
7 Years

Best Wishes!



HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

A REGULAR COLUMN BY KINDA-HISTORIAN MELANIE CASINEAU

APRIL 1955

Hidden within the history of the 104th Fighter Wing lies a captivating story, one that contrasts the assumptions of time—of an aircraft plunging into the icy waters of the Quabbin Reservoir—with the truth of its final resting place in the woods.

Every month, I dive deep into archives, scouring photos, yearbooks, documents, and speaking with alumni during dinners, all to uncover stories that connect us to our past. For our AirScoop newsletter, social media, or podcast, I look for tales that coincide with the month we're in. This time, it was April 3rd, 1955.

From the 104th Fighter Group's Tenth Anniversary Yearbook (1947-1957), this paragraph caught my attention:

"A sudden snowstorm during the training assembly of April 3rd, 1955, was one of the factors which prompted Lt. Dewey Durrett to abandon his F-94 over Quabbin Reservoir and parachute to safety. These he did, ending up by hitchhiking back to civilization after making his way out of the woods in which he came to rest. An intensive search of the Quabbin area in the days which followed, however, failed to show any trace of the missing aircraft."

This left me with so many questions. How did we lose an aircraft so close to home? Where did it go, and why wasn't it found? Thankful for our current tool, the internet, I began searching for answers.

According to New England Aviation History in a story titled Quabbin Reservoir Land, April 3, 1955, U.S. Air Force First Lt. Dewey Durrett, a pilot with the 104th Fighter Group, had been on a navigational training flight, returning to base during a snowstorm. Radar contact was lost, fuel was running low, and he made the decision to bail out. He landed in the woods, saw no explosion, and assumed the jet had broken through the ice of the Quabbin Reservoir.

What had actually happened with the F-94 was that it had crashed in a wooded area within the town limits of Petersham, MA, about a mile from the Dana Common gate. Dana Common, evacuated years earlier for the creation of the 38-square-mile Quabbin Reservoir, was a quiet, uninhabited forest. No wonder no one saw the crash—it wasn't discovered until nearly four years later.

In the 104th Fighter Group's Twentieth Anniversary Yearbook (1947-1967), this oversight was corrected:

"...and the loss of an F-94 in the Quabbin reservoir area by Lt. Dewey Durrett, who parachuted to safety. The plane defied searchers for years but was finally located in a wood section nearly four years later."

Today, the wreckage of the F-94 Starfire remains in the woods, a silent testament to this forgotten history. Despite over 70 years having passed, the site is still visible. You may also not be aware that removing any part of the wreckage is prohibited by federal and state law. It seems that has been respected over time.

More information about the crash site can be found at woodlandhiker.com in a story titled Quabbin Reservoir F-94A Starfire Jet Crash.

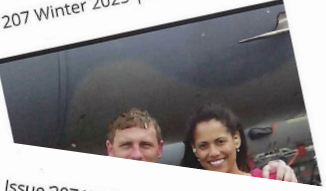
For those curious enough to visit this hidden piece of history, most navigation apps can guide you to the site. The 7-mile round-trip trail is most viewable during fall and winter, when the forest quiets down and the crash site is easier to spot. Here is a paragraph from the editor of the tenth anniversary edition, John Lundberg.

"The gathering of the facts behind the history of the Air Guard units at Barnes, although based on records and memories with which we have never quite lost contact, still turned up items of forgotten data which impressed us. The big story here too, is one of constant growth and the application of the same principals of foresight, sound planning and definite and directed action."

I hope you find this story as fascinating as I did. History serves as a powerful reminder of how far we've come, offering us the perspective to appreciate our progress and growth.



ACTIVE DUTY



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Catching Up With Dad, cont.

after he and my mom did the same in 1996. I'd tell him about the new Bond movies we never got to watch together and how I still watch all of our favorite movies when I miss him.

I'd tell him I had no idea how amazing the feeling of flight was until I started pilot training and how much I love it.

I'd tell him that I try to keep a few gloves on hand and break them open night after flying days that could've been better. I'd ask him how he did it—how to handle the stress and the hooks, how it's so good at flying.

I'd ask him how it felt on drop when he got assigned F-15Cs and how I felt when I dropped F-22s a year.

I'd tell him how I went to Raft and was in the 435th Deadly for Intro to Fighter Fundamentals like he was. I'd tell him how my instructors and my classmates reminded me of what I know—that the people that extend outside of our experiences we have are truly what make the world.

I'd tell him I had the T-38C on my on that day I remember how much earlier on my 15th birthday.



the house or on a picnic table in to make sure I was safe and making lap. One time, I found him passed out asleep in his flight suit on a table. He was so tired after a long flying, but he still showed up to spend one-on-one time with my daughter date with my sister every year, even if it was early or late because of TDY.

The last time my dad's birthday was a month before his decided Six Flags was after a few hours to grab a drink and sip on a Java when he looked at me and I don't know why I was feeling that way. It was a big one day, comment, but words couldn't make me. He saw I didn't seem to realize I made a dad's birthday.

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Catching Up With Dad

NATALIE FONTENOT
1st Lt USAF

1st Lt Natalie Fontenot is the daughter of Lt Col Morris "Moose" Fontenot, Jr. who was killed in the line of duty while serving in the Massachusetts ANG. Natalie is an incredible young American, serving in the United States Air Force, and graciously agreed to share her story with us.

August 27, 2014, Lt Col Morris "Moose" Fontenot, dad, stepped for his final flight. It was just another Wednesday in the fast jet business. He was taking an F-15C Eagle, aircraft 86-0157, from Barnes Air National Guard Base to Naval Air Station Reserve Base New Orleans for the APG-63 V(3) radar modification upgrade. It was a solo sortie, one that should have been relatively uneventful for a seasoned fighter pilot with 2,300 hours. That day was the last time he climbed up the ladder, conducted his final series of preflight checks, made his last taxi, and received his final takeoff clearance. He climbed up to his cruising altitude, FL430, and about half an hour later, he was on frequency with Washington Center when something went wrong. "Hawk 11 declaring emergency." The controller queried him for further information. "Affirm, standby." His last radio call. Nature of the IFE a mystery. Shortly after, he was incapacitated in a 60-70 degree nose low inverted dive. The impact of his jet into the mountainous woods of Deerfield, Virginia left a crater 20ft deep.

Almost 10 years later, I found myself through a loop in a T-38C Talon for the first time, trying not to dive through the MOA floor. There I was, adrenaline pumping, speed increasing, altitude decreasing, pulling through, light g-strain, breathe. In that moment, I felt pure joy. Years of work, support and help from friends, family, classmates, instructors, and mentors going all the way back to the Academy, as well as a few insane strokes of luck that some would call God, led me here. My dad, the powerful memory of him, led

me here. My love for my dad has fueled my drive and passion, has accompanied me through failure and stress, and has heightened every bit of joy and love I have for this community and this job. Now, and ever since I was a little girl, my dad has been my hero.

One of my earliest memories of my dad was from one particular night while our family was stationed at Eglin AFB in Florida. I now understand that my dad wasn't home until after my mom put me to bed. I must've been about 3-4 years old. He woke us up when he got home and said something like, "Hey guys, I have a surprise for you. Do you wanna see some magic?" Half awake, my sister and I heard a weird crunching noise and saw a bright neon light appear. It was a chem light or military-grade glow stick. "Watch through the air, creating magnificent neon ribbons of light in different loops, figure eights, and patterns as we watched in awe. He pulled out another one, cracked it, shook it, and then handed one to me and the other to my sister. He told us he loved us and kissed us goodnight. We waved around our glow sticks until we fell back asleep.

No matter how tired my dad was at the end of a long flying day or week, he always had enough energy left for us. He would blast Dancing Queen by ABBA in the living room and have dance parties with us as soon as he walked in the door after work, flight suit still on. He would scoop me up and demand that we practice for our daddy-daughter dance we would have at my wedding one day. He would put on



Read the entire story at river-rats.org

F-35 CONVERSION CORNER

The conversion journey began in Spring of 2023 when the secretary of the Air Force approved Barnes ANGB as the preferred location for a new fleet of F-35s. This selection drove the requirement for favorable completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was achieved in November 2024. Upon favorable completion of the EIS, the Secretary of the Air Force signed and reported to Congress the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was approved in December 2024, which means that the decision to station the F-35 at Barnes is official! We have already begun divesting F-15s and will continue divesting through September of this year in preparation for the arrival of our first F-35s in June 2026.

-Maj. Mark 'Mr. Chow' Silvers



21

**Personnel currently
off-base training
(1 Pilot | 20 Maintainers)**

17

**Additional Barnestormers
training off-base this Spring
as part of the "Core Cadre"**

15

**New construction projects
scheduled throughout the
conversion - starting with OPS**

20

**The number of F-35s
scheduled to be delivered
by Summer 2027**



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