

## 170 FIGHTER SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

305 Fighter Squadron constituted, 16 Jul 1942

Activated, 22 Jul 1942

Disbanded, 1 May 1944

Reconstituted and redesignated 170 Fighter Squadron and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946

170 Fighter Squadron received Federal recognition, 30 Sep 1948

Redesignated 170 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 9 Apr 1951

Redesignated 170 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 Jul 1955

Redesignated 170 Tactical Fighter Squadron (Special Delivery), 10 Nov 1958

Redesignated 170 Tactical Fighter Squadron,

Redesignated 170 Fighter Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

Inactivated

### STATIONS

Dale Mabry Field, FL, 22 Jul 1942

Sarasota, FL, 25 Sep 1942

Cross City, FL, 21 Oct 1942

Dale Mabry Field, FL, 13 Jun 1943-1 May 1944

Springfield, IL, 24 May 1946

### ASSIGNMENTS

338 Fighter Group, 22 Jul 1942-1 May 1944

131 Tactical Fighter, 19 July 1949

183 Tactical Fighter Group, Oct 1962

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS Mission**

#### **Aircraft**

P-39, 1942

P-47, 1943

P-40, 1944

F-51, 1948

F-86, 1953

F-84, 1955

F-4, 1971

RF-4, 1973

F-4, 1981

F-16, 1989

#### **Support Aircraft**

B-26

### **COMMANDERS**

Capt Ralph Eads, 30 Sep 1948

Maj Ralph A. Bush, 10 May 1953 19 May 1953

Capt Shirley V. Drum, Jun 1956

Capt Harold G. Holesinger, Jan 1958

Maj Richard Eslinger, 1962

Lt Col Wayne A. Rosenthal

Maj Ronald D. Briney,

Maj Joseph W. Lucas,

Maj Dan R. McKinney

Maj David S. Graben and

Lt Col Eugene W. Pottenger

Lt Col Leo W. Renfrow Jr.

Maj Dennis K. Omundson

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

#### **American Theater**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

## EMBLEM



On a light turquoise blue disc, border white, edged black, a snake's head affronte tan, mouth rim yellow, fangs white, mouth red, shaded dark red, with forked tongue formed by yellow lightning bolt issuing toward sinister base, eyes yellow, pupils light turquoise blue, all in front of a large white cloud formation, outlined black. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The snake's head portrays the striking power of the Squadron and is placed on the cloud to simulate flight. It is the opinion of the Squadron that the snake aptly portrays the spirit and fighting qualities of their pilots. (Approved, 17 February 1944)

## MOTTO

Fly' N Illini

## OPERATIONS

On 22 July 1942, the 305th Fighter Squadron, the forerunner of the 170, was constituted and activated at Dale Mabry Field in Tallahassee, Florida. The 305th performed stateside duty until

1 May 1944 when it was disbanded. On 24 May 1946 the old 305th was reconstituted and redesignated as the 170 Fighter Squadron (SE) and allotted to the National Guard of Illinois.

Many thoughts went through the minds of those 60 men (14 officers and 46 airmen) assembled at the Illinois State Armory on the night of 30 September 1948. The moment had arrived for the personnel inspection prior to the granting of federal recognition. Many silent questions were posed. Is our strength adequate and are we qualified? Does our military appearance meet the standards? What if we fail this inspection? The answers to these questions are now history as federal recognition was extended to the following units: Detachment C, 231st Service Group, Commanded by Captain Lester J Litwiller, with a strength of three officers and 27 airmen; 170 Utility Flight, commanded by 1st Lt George Kelly, with two officers and four airmen; 170 Weather Station, commanded by 2nd Lt Donald M Gorey, with one officer and two airmen; and the 170 Fighter Squadron (SE), commanded by Captain Ralph Eads, with a strength of eight officers and 13 airmen. From this early drama and subsequent operations out of Committee Room "A" of the State Armory, a great deal of history has evolved.

The 170 received its first F-51 in December 1948. Unit training assemblies at that time were being conducted for two hours each Thursday night at the Armory, but by April 1949 the units moved from the Armory to a small building at the entrance of the Capital Airport while waiting the completion of the unit's \$ 600,000 new hangar.

After federal recognition it wasn't long before the first aircraft came along. Early in December 1948, Captain Ralph Eads, unit commander, and Ernest L Horning, maintenance officer, inspected and accepted the F-51 allotted to us by the United States Air Force.

Early in 1948 it appeared that the 170 would soon have a home of its own. The federal government announced a \$1,200,000 ANG project which would be centered around a "huge new hangar", a paved aircraft parking area of 300, 000 square feet, a warehouse building, armament, storage, repair facilities, and utility roads. Office space was to be on the second floor of the hangar.

By February of 1949 sixty full time technicians formed the nucleus of the 170 as Thursday night drills became a way of life. On 30 April 1949 the units moved to a small building located at the entrance to the airport. Field Training in 1949 was held at "tent city," Capital Airport as the local troops got a taste of camp life once again.

Unit training assemblies at that time were being conducted for two hours each Thursday night at the Armory, but by April 1949 the units moved from the Armory to a small building at the entrance of the Capital Airport while waiting the completion of the unit's \$600,000 new hangar. The unit's first summer Field Training was accomplished at Capitol Airport with personnel living in tents and no hangar available to house their F-51s. During this encampment and in addition to flying training, the squadron's planes were used to spray Springfield and surrounding small towns with DDT in an effort to control a polio epidemic.

Probably the earliest task the 170 picked up was a simulated combat mission to Dallas, Texas in 1949, where "subversives" had gained control and our pilots were to bomb and strafe the enemy installations. All returned from this mission safe and sound, ready for the next call.

During the summer of 1949 a different type of mission or service was performed by the men of the 170. A polio epidemic had spread throughout central Illinois and the Air Guard had undertaken the spraying of DDT from the air over areas of several communities, including certain parts of Springfield proper. People had panicked somewhat and officials felt a mass spraying program would help general community feelings.

On 31 October 1949 the 170 lost its first pilot in a flaming crash at Jackson, Mississippi. This was Captain John J Laurie who had just recently relieved Captain Ralph Eads, and who had assumed command of the squadron. Captain John R Park then became commander.

During May of 1950 the squadron moved into its new hangar at Capital Airport, finally obtaining a permanent home.

May 1950, the squadron moved into its new hangar and in August of the same year it accomplished its annual Field Training at Camp Williams, Wisconsin (present-day Volk Field).

The F-51, May of 1950 when we moved into a new hangar at Capital Airport, and was still with us in March of 1951 when we were ordered to active duty for 21 months due to the Korean Conflict.

On 31 October 1950 Detachment C, 231st Air Service Group and the 170 Utility Flight were deactivated. This left the 170 Weather Station and the 170 Ftr Bomber Squadron as the only units remaining at Capital Airport. Personnel of deactivated units were transferred to the remaining units.

On 1 March 1951 the Weather Station and the Fighter Squadron were ordered to active duty with the United States Air Force for 21 months due to the Korean situation. A total of 450 men were housed at the State Fairgrounds, in the 4-H Building. First Lieutenant Gorey commanded the 170 Weather Station and Captain Nils Kluksdal replaced Captain Park as the 170 Fighter Squadron commander.

On 1 Mar 1951, the 170 Fighter Bomber Squadron was ordered into active duty with the U.S. Air Force for 21 months during the Korean Conflict. A total of 450 men of the 170 plus its subordinate units were housed at the State Fair Grounds before moving on to Bergstrom AFB, TX and assigned to the Strategic Air Command, moving again from Texas to George AFB, CA in Jul 1951 and reassigned to Tactical Air Command. While on this tour of active duty, the squadron participated in the joint Army-Air Force "LONG-HORN" maneuvers at Waco Texas, which involved 115,000 troops.

Both units moved to Bergstrom AFB, Texas on 15 March 1951. The Weather Station was

assigned to Materiel Training Command; its personnel were sent to various other weather stations, and the unit was deactivated. The Fighter Squadron remained at Bergstrom and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command Shortly after the squadron arrived, Major William P Nancy replaced Captain Kluksdal as its commander.

Effective 9 April 1951 the 170 Fighter Squadron (SE) was redesignated the 170 Fighter Bomber Squadron. On 10 July 1951, the Fighter Bomber Squadron moved from Bergstrom to George AFB, Victorville, California, and later assigned to Tactical Air Command. While on this tour of active duty, the squadron participated in the joint Army-Air Force "Long Horn" maneuvers at Waco, Texas which involved 115,000 troops.

During August 1952 personnel began to be individually released from active duty with the Air Force providing a replacement was available AFSC and grade-wise. Once replacements came men of the 170 began returning to Springfield and home. Until the entire unit was released from active duty, a holding unit, the 8170 Air Base Squadron commanded by Captain Robert J Spriet was formed at Springfield. By the end of November the squadron was released and reverted back to the State of Illinois, replacing the 8170 Air Base Squadron.

Starting in Aug 1952, personnel of the 170 were phased out of active service and returning to Springfield, IL, where by Nov of the same year, the 170 was officially relieved from active duty and reverted back to the State of IL, and replaced the holding unit (the 8170 Air Base Group) which had been formed during the intervening months between release from active duty and reactivation as an Illinois Air National Guard flying unit.

With Maj Ralph A. Bush assuming command on 19 May 1953, the 170 Fighter Bomber Squadron, with augmented Maintenance, Supply, Motor Vehicle, Communications, Air Police, Food Service, Installations and Medical personnel, attended summer Field Training at Camp Williams, Wisconsin, in conjunction with the 169th Fighter Bomber Squadron from Peoria, and the Chicago-based 264th Air Force Communications Squadron and the 878th Engineers. This was the unit's first Field Training since its release from active duty.

Upon return from active duty the squadron embarked on a vigorous recruiting campaign to build up strength as many of our former members elected to remain in the Air Force.

The year 1953 was to be a big year for the 170. Major Ralph A Bush assumed command of the unit 10 May 1953, in what was to be a long lasting relationship.

Jet aircraft burst on the 170 scene in 1953 when in November the first T-33 arrived. Then on 18 November 1953, the first F-86 was assigned and the F-51, was phased out of the unit. This move to jet aircraft marked the beginning of a long period of illustrious service in the jet age which we are still continuing and of which we are justly proud.

In August of 1954 unit F-86 and aircrews participated in several Air Defense Command (ADC) alert exercises. In less than a year after receiving the Sabres our pilots were proficiently

handling Air Force missions.

The first F-84F arrived on 2 February 1955 and the F-86 was phased out. The Thunderstreak was to become a permanent fixture around Springfield for many years to come.



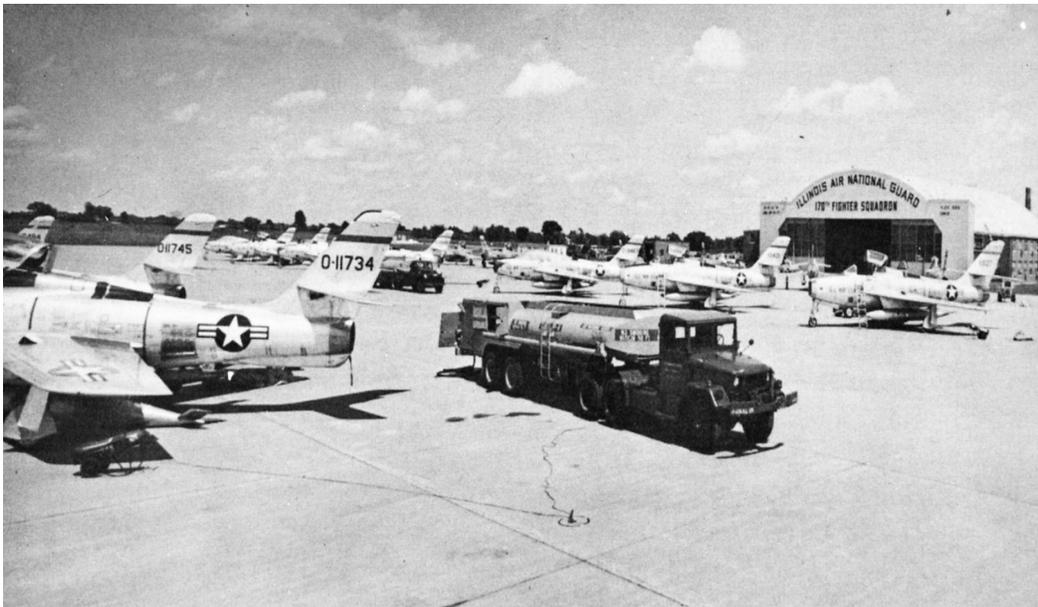
Refueling a squadron F-84



Pilot boarding his F-84



F-84 pilot in squadron operations



Squadron's F-84s

Captain Shirley V Drum assumed command of the squadron on 11 June 1956 as Lt Col Bush was elevated to Director of Operations of the 126th Fighter Interceptor Wing at Chicago.

During July of 1956 Captain Drum distinguished himself, the unit, and the Air National Guard by finishing in second place in the annual Ricks Memorial Trophy Race from Fresno, California to Washington, D.C. His time was four hours and nineteen minutes, only six minutes behind the winner. This was a fine achievement by Captain Drum.

Near the end of 1957 a million dollar project was being completed. Included in the project were: two thousand feet of runway extension, ramp and apron facilities and rocket storage space.

Captain Harold G Holesinger assumed command of the squadron in January 1958.

By Mar 1958, the squadron assumed a nuclear weapon capability as part of the Chicago-based 126th Air Defense Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard.

In May and June 1959, the squadron participated in Operation "DARK CLOUD - PINE CONE II" at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and in July of the same year, the unit with over 480 Officers and airmen attended summer Field Training, in conjunction with Peoria's 169th Squadron at Volk Field (Camp Williams), Wisconsin.

In January 1960, several pilots of the 170 Squadron participated in a fire-power demonstration at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and another firepower demonstration was staged at Duluth, Minnesota.

The 170 participated in a huge fire-power demonstration at Fort Sill, Oklahoma in January 1960. Eight F-84s were involved as our unit was one of three selected for the demonstration.

By August of 1961 word was out that several units would be mobilized within two months. Sure enough, on 25 August the order came and the 170 was called to active federal service effective

1 October 1961. Training had been stepped up with additional drills authorized during the period immediately preceding the call-up. When activation came, we were ready!

Rumors abounded about "shipping out" from the first day of active duty. As early as 12 October announcement came that eleven ANG fighter squadrons would be deployed to Europe, but the 170 was not on the list and was destined to remain at home station for the duration of the active tour, utilizing the 4-H Building at the State Fairgrounds for housing and messing, as it had done in 1951. Original plans had called for the unit to go to France, but a cooling off of the Berlin situation cancelled the order.

Many of our people would be reassigned to fill empty slots with units destined for Europe and several other members would participate in various exercises and maneuvers. During the tour men of the 170 were sent to places like Madrid, Spain; Sonderstrom, Greenland; Toul Rosieres, France; Keflavik, Iceland; and the Panama Canal Zone. Stateside we had people at various times in Arizona, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Virginia, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Washington, South Carolina, Florida, and Michigan.

By summer of 1962 we received notice that the unit would be released from active duty earlier than the one year period for which we were called. Official notification came and on 1 August 1962 deactivation was formalized and the 170 was once again ANG as Governor Otto Kerner welcomed us back to the state.

In October of 1962 the 170 was reorganized from the single squadron concept to that of a tactical fighter group with four support units newly organized. Colonel Ralph A Bush was 183d Tactical Fighter Group commander with Major Richard M Eslinger named to command the 170 Tactical Fighter Squadron, Major Robert F Herigodt to command 183d Materiel Squadron, Major H.W.R. Fluckiger, our Flight Surgeon, to command the 183d Dispensary, and Major Ernest W. Chumley to command the 183d Combat Support Squadron, Maj Harold G Holesinger, past commander of the 170 was elevated to the post of Deputy Commander for Operations of the Group.



Maj Richard Eslinger

Between 1963 and 1966, the 183rd Group's tactical squadron and support personnel deployed New York, California, Georgia and Alaska and participated in such operations as "APACHE OPAL", "DESERT STRIKE", "DIAMOND LIL XVH", and other weapons deployment exercises, in addition to accomplishing its annual Field Training at Volk Field, Wisconsin.

In June 1964 plans for a \$300,000 office building were being formalized for submission and approval. Construction began in 1965. In November of 1965 another reorganization came about.



Probably along about this time was one of our most memorable camps, for a very different reason. The 1966 field training at Volk Field, Wisconsin had a flu virus spread and over sixty Guardsmen came down with the "bug". Other-wise, as during most "camps", as usual the job got done.

During January 1967 our Air Force Advisor, Lt Col James R Hopkins, received Medal of Honor. The 183d participated in suitable ceremonies for the occasion Colonel Hopkins received the award for leading a flight of F-105s in the first USAF strike on the fuel storage areas of Hanoi, Vietnam.

During April of 1967 about 100 members of the 183d participated in a joint amphibious and airborne training exercise called Clove Hitch III in Puerto Rico. Ten F-84s were flown from Springfield and took part in this immense exercise. Our troops and equipment were flown down and back in C-130s. In all, some 21,000 personnel from all services participated.

Our new office building was ready for occupancy in the summer of 1967 and the move was eagerly made. We now had our first separate dining hall and medical facilities, as well as new

office space for our varied administrative functions.

1970 Exercise Punch Card III. C-141s flew support personnel to Anchorage.

Our second big operation in three years found us participating in ACID TEST HI/PUNCH CARD XII, a ten day exercise held in Alaska during December 1970. Eight of our F-84s flew to Elmendorf Air Force Base and the F-84 flying time from Springfield required two air-to-air refuelings and took just over seven hours to reach Anchorage. As a point of interest, Colonel Bush's ETA filed from Springfield for his flight differed by only 30 seconds from the actual arrival time. That's really calling the shot, as they say. Our purpose in the exercise was to provide close air support for "aggressor troops" of the U. S. Army stationed in Alaska. It sounds rather strange to go to Alaska in December for any type of an operation especially when temperatures range far below zero (it was -60° one day at the area where the mission was performed), but the exercise was evaluated a total success.

A highlight of our pilot's flying abilities was indicated when Lt Col Rawlings, Maj Lucas, and Capt Hugh Jackson got together and "shot down" an F-4E and a Canadian CF-5 (with their gun cameras). That's not bad shooting from a twenty year old F-84 aircraft! The return trip was uneventful and once again our unit did all that 'was asked of it, proving again that we are one of the best.

The year 1971 marked the first year, except for years we were on ex-tended active duty, that we did not go to annual training as a combined unit. With the advent of the F-4 and the tremendous training load we would immediately absorb the Group began year around home station training to more effectively utilize people at different periods during the year. This concept was prevalent throughout 1972 and again in 1973.

The 31st of January 1972 was an-other memorable day as the first of our F-4 was flown in and now we could pride fully say we were an F-4 outfit. In April of 1972 we received four more Phantoms flown here by our own pilots. By this time we were headlong into retraining. Many of our flight crews, both pilots and Weapons Systems Officers (WSOs), had been through check-out training at George AFB and Luke AFB. A Field Training Detachment (FTD) came in and set up a training program on the F-4 at the State Fairgrounds.

Training and plain hard work followed and in the months to come we became more and more familiar with the new aircraft. The air technician detachment was increased to help cope primarily with the added maintenance workload. Additionally, the Air Force Advisor's Operating Location was augmented with an additional average of 28 specialists, to assist in the conversion and training program.

The most memorable deployment to date found us involved in Exercise Coronet Quail deploying to Ghedi Air Base, Italy in May 1978. The duration of the exercise was twenty-two days. Twelve F-4C Phantoms made the approximate six hour uninterrupted flight with five air to air refuelings, to this base in Northern Italy where no ANG unit had previously deployed.

Personnel deployed with most people traveling by C-141 aircraft. Rain plagued part of the operation but considerable experience was gained by aircrews flying in the NATO environment. Personnel were fed at Ghedi in a field dining facility, but quarters were contracted in the town of Desenzano, a few miles away. The experience gained by all, from this momentous undertaking, would help us greatly later in similar deployments.

In March and April of 1979 the 183d participated in a Red Flag exercise at Nellis AFB, Nevada. We were tasked with two periods of two weeks duration and a total of one hundred sixteen people supported each tour. Ten F-4Cs were deployed. Participating in a Red Flag increases unit capability and operations in a tactical scenario as part of a composite strike force. The experience gained by our aircrews in this environment was invaluable. As a sidelight to this operation the troops were billeted in contract quarters in Las Vegas which needless to say was an experience in itself and a far cry from the tent cities of years gone by.

In late July 1979 the 183d became the first Air National Guard unit to participate in the Air Force's Weapon System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Eglin AFB, Florida. The purpose of a WSEP exercise is to fire live missiles in verifying a unit's combat capability and the system integrity of unit aircraft. Eighty personnel took part supporting seven F-4s with an overall outstanding performance rating being determined in competition with active units.



Squadron converted from the "C" model to F-4D aircraft effective 1 January 1981 with our F-4Cs being transferred to other ANG units.

In June 1982, for the second time in four years, we were tasked with another overseas deployment. This time we went to RAF Finningley in the United Kingdom participating in Coronet Brave. Finningley is near the city of Doncaster, England. F-4 Phantoms once again

performed outstanding in their flights across the ocean. Sixty-nine officers and one hundred eighty-one enlisted troops made the trip, transported mostly in C-141 aircraft. A great deal of experience was gained in all areas by operating in the environment of. actually working with our counterparts daily. A highlight of our visit was Colonel Eslinger exchanging a memento with the Lord Mayor of Doncaster in his mansion. The English people were very receptive to our visit and Finningley personnel could not have been more gracious.

Early in 1983 the F-4Ds commenced a conversion program to the smokeless engine eliminating the smoke trail making it safer in a combat situation and, of course, it becomes more environmentally pleasing.

In March 1988 we deployed to Gulfport. MS with twenty-four F-4s and more than eight hundred men and women in an annual training exercise directed at preparation for the next ORI.

On 7 Jun 1989 the first two F-16s landed at Capital Airport, This was the beginning of the conversion from the F-4Ds to the F-16s. May 5 1990 marked the official acceptance.

On 17 November 1999, at 1832 hours local time (0032Z), two F-16C aircraft, S/Ns 87-0240 and 86- 0263, collided with each other while flying in the Howard Military Operating Area (MOA) approximately 45 miles northwest of Springfield, IL. The F-16Cs, assigned to the 170 FS, 183 FW, Illinois Air National Guard, Capital Airport, Springfield, IL, were flying a two-ship night vision goggle (NVG) upgrade sortie. The instructor pilot flying aircraft 87-0240, Major Ricky G. Yoder, ejected safely suffering only minor injuries.

His aircraft crashed in a remote, wooded area 1.2 miles west-northwest of Vermont, IL and was destroyed. The collision and impact caused minor damage to a civilian residential carport and no confirmed injuries to civilian personnel on the ground. Aircraft 86-0263 returned to Capital Airport and landed safely. The upgrading pilot, First Lieutenant (1st Lt) Thomas J. Hildebrand, was not injured. The loss of aircraft 87-0240 is estimated at \$19,098,764.00. The cost estimate to repair aircraft 86-0263 is \$913,710.00.

The mid-air collision occurred on the first air-to-air intercept set-up. The scenario was a visual identification intercept on a simulated unknown target aircraft. The instructor pilot, Major Yoder, acted as a slow-speed, lights out target with 1st Lt Hildebrand performing the intercept while using NVGs. 1st Lt Hildebrand flew a high-to-low intercept but never achieved sufficient lateral displacement necessary for a smooth, controlled intercept. Moreover, he initiated his conversion turn to the target's stem too early and with too much closing velocity (Vc) for the situation. This resulted in him rolling out only 500 feet behind the target with over 180 knots of overtake.

Not aware of his aircraft's position and airspeed relative to the target aircraft, 1st Lt Hildebrand continued forward colliding with the Major Yoder's aircraft while maintaining 180 knots Vc. He initiated an evasive maneuver only 200 feet and less than one second prior to impact. 1st Lt Hildebrand's right wing impacted and severed Major Yoder's left horizontal tail and severely damaged the corresponding hydraulic integrated servoactuator. Major Yoder's aircraft then experienced dual hydraulic failure and subsequently went out of control. The

collision also severed approximately 33 inches of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Hildebrand's right wing. Fortunately, he was able to recover his aircraft safely to Springfield's Capital Airport.

In summary, the primary cause of this mishap, supported by clear and convincing evidence, was 1st Lt Hildebrand's extreme loss of situational awareness during the night, slow-speed intercept. 1st Lt Hildebrand flew an aggressively tight intercept giving him very little margin for error during the terminal phase of the maneuver. Additionally, he never attempted to moderate his overtake velocity nor alter his flight path geometry throughout the intercept in order to fly a more controlled maneuver. Furthermore, he did not fully realize his aircraft's spatial relationship with the target aircraft until immediately prior to impact.



60th Anniversary F-16C #87-0296 from the 170th FS leaving Springfield IAP for its final training flight in September 2008.

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USAF Unit Histories  
Created: 12 Oct 2010  
Updated: 17 Sep 2023

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