

## 77<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

77<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron organized, 20 Feb 1918  
Redesignated Squadron A, Barron Field, TX, 21 Jul 1918  
Demobilized, 18 Nov 1918

77<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron constituted, 18 Oct 1927  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, 8 May 1929  
Activated, 15 Nov 1930

Squadron A, Barron Field, TX reconstituted and consolidated with 77<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, 1936

Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Fighter), 6 Dec 1939  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor), 12 Mar 1941  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (Twin-Engine), 30 Dec 1942  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Twin-Engine, 20 Aug 1943  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 5 Sep 1944  
Inactivated, 18 Oct 1945  
Activated, 29 Jul 1946  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Jet, 15 Jun 1948  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 20 Jan 1950  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8 Jul 1958  
Redesignated 77<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1991  
Inactivated, 30 Sep 1993  
Activated, 1 Jan 1994

## **STATIONS**

Waco, TX, 20 Feb 1918  
Taliaferro Field No. 1, TX, Feb 1918  
Taliaferro Field No. 2, (later, Barron Field) TX, Mar–18 Nov 1918  
Mather Field, CA, 15 Nov 1930–14 Oct 1932  
Barksdale Field, LA, 31 Oct 1932  
Moffett Field, CA, 19 Nov 1939  
Hamilton Field, CA, 9 Sep 1940  
Wilmington, NC, c. 21 Feb 1942  
Morris Field, NC, 24 Apr 1942  
Drew Field, FL, Aug 1942  
Paine Field, WA, 30 Sep 1942  
March Field, CA, c. 1 Jan–11 Aug 1943  
Kings Cliffe, England, c. 27 Aug 1943–11 Oct 1945  
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 16–18 Oct 1945  
Biggs Field, TX, 29 Jul 1946  
***Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 13 Sep 1946-5 Oct 1946***  
Shaw Field (later, AFB), SC, 25 Oct 1946  
Langley AFB, VA, 19 Nov 1951–22 May 1952  
Wethersfield, England, 1 Jun 1952  
Shepherds Grove, England, 9 Aug 1955  
Wethersfield, England, 27 Apr 1956  
RAF Upper Heyford, England, c. 1 May 1970–30 Sep 1993  
Shaw AFB, SC, 1 Jan 1994

## **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Incirlik AB, Turkey, 1–31 Aug 1990 and Feb 1991

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Unkn, 1918  
20<sup>th</sup> Pursuit (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter) Group, 15 Nov 1930–18 Oct 1945  
20<sup>th</sup> Fighter (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber) Group, 29 Jul 1946  
20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter) Wing, 8 Feb 1955  
20<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 31 Mar 1992–30 Sep 1993  
20<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 1 Jan 1994

## **ATTACHMENTS**

20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Wing, 15 Nov 1952–7 Feb 1955  
39<sup>th</sup> Tactical Group, 1–31 Aug 1990 and Feb 1991

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

JN-4  
JN-6

S-4 1918  
P-12, 1930-1935  
DH-4 1931  
P-26, 1934-1938  
P-36, 1938-1940  
P-40, 1940-1942  
P-39, 1942-1943  
P-38, 1943-1944  
P-51, 1944-1945  
P-51, 1946-1948  
F-84, 1948-1957  
F-100, 1957-1970  
F-111, 1970-1993  
F-16C  
F-16D  
P-38H  
P-38J  
P-51B  
P-51C  
P-51D  
P-51K  
F-84D  
F-84E  
P-12A  
P-12B  
P-12E  
P-12F  
P-26A  
P-26B  
P-36A  
P-36D  
P-38E  
P-38G  
P-38H  
P-38J  
P-39D  
P-39F  
P-39G  
P-39L  
P-40B  
P-40D  
P-40E  
P-40F  
P-40G

P-43A

### **COMMANDERS**

Unkn, 20 Feb-18 Nov 1918  
Cpt Charles W. Childress, 16 May 1928  
1Lt Walter E. Richards, 15 Nov 1930  
2Lt Joseph G. Hopkins, 13 Jun 1931  
Cpt Hilbert H. Wittkop, 18 Aug 1931  
2Lt Joseph G. Hopkins, 8 Jul 1932  
Cpt John M. Clark, 5 Dec 1932  
Cpt Thomas B. McDonald, 30 Jul 1935  
Maj Oliver P. Gothlin, Jr., 14 Sep 1935  
Maj Carlton F. Bond, 23 Aug 1936  
1Lt Orrin L. Grover, 1 Apr 1937  
1Lt Phineas K. Morril, 1 Jun 1937  
Maj Milo N. Clark, 10 Aug 1937-6 Jul 1938  
Cpt Orrin L. Grover, 18 Jul 1938  
Maj James W. McCauley, Aug 1939-Feb 1941  
1Lt Graham W. West, Sep 1941-Dec 1941  
Cpt Barton M. Russell, 5 Dec 1941-unkn  
Maj Robert P. Montgomery, by Oct 1943  
Maj Herbert E. Johnson Jr., 12 Nov 1943  
Maj Russell F. Gustke, 9 Mar 1944  
Maj Merle B. Nichols, 18 Dec 1944  
Maj George S. Wemyss, 30 Sep-Oct 1945  
LTC John J. Hussey Jr., unkn-11 Sep 1946  
Maj Harry G. Peterson, 11 Sep 1946  
LTC Niven K. Cranfill, 5 Dec 1946  
Maj Delynn E. Anderson, 28 Apr 1948  
LTC Robert A. Barnum, 13 Nov 1948  
LTC Edward S. E. Newbury, by 30 Apr 1949  
Col Dean Davenport, 24 May 1950  
Maj William L. Jacobsen, c. 1 Feb 1951  
LTC William J. Payne, by 30 Jun 1951  
Maj Harry H. Moreland, unkn-4 Sep 1951  
LTC John W. Meador, 4 Sep 1951  
Maj John J. Kropenick, 3 Dec 1951  
LTC Bruce L. Morrison, 9 Feb 1952  
Maj George W. Askew Jr., Jul 1953  
LTC Paul E. Adams, by Oct 1953  
Maj George W. Askew Jr., 1 Jul 1955  
LTC William F. Harris, Nov 1955  
LTC Robert A. Ackerly, c. Dec 1956  
LTC Ray S. White, 21 Apr 1958

Maj Felix A. Blanchard, by 29 Jun 1960  
Maj Dwight N. Hillis, 16 Jul 1961  
Maj Robert F. Ronca, by 30 Jun 1963  
LTC Virgil K. Meroney, by 6 Aug 1963  
LTC Robert C. Laliberte, 24 Aug 1964  
LTC Stanley L. Evers, 25 Jul 1966  
LTC Donald H. Hooten, 19 Apr 1968  
LTC Robert L. Burns, 20 Jun 1969  
LTC Jude R. McNamara, 6 Nov 1970  
LTC Frank L. Yow Jr., 16 Dec 1971  
LTC William L. Broomall Jr., 11 Jan 1972  
LTC Charles A. Hering, 10 Jun 1974  
LTC Ronald D. McDonald Jr., 1 Aug 1975  
LTC William W. Hopkins Jr., 16 Jul 1977  
LTC Frank B. Payne, 18 Aug 1976  
LTC Leo J. Lemoine, 28 Jan 1980 (temporary)  
LTC Richard R. Riddick, 1 Apr 1980  
LTC Raymond J. Bartholomew, 12 Mar 1982  
LTC Wilson D. Briley Jr., 6 Jan 1984  
LTC John H. Cain, 11 Feb 1985  
LTC Jon G. Safely, 20 Nov 1986  
LTC David F. MacGhee, 6 Jun 1988  
LTC Harold H. Barton Jr., 11 Jun 1990  
LTC Wesley E. Trevett, 20 Mar 1992  
LTC James D. Matheny, unkn-30 Sep 1993  
Unkn, 1 Jan 1994  
LTC William J. Shirey, 30 Sep 1994  
LTC Michael R. Cook, 10 May 1996  
LTC David G. Minto, 31 Dec 1997  
LTC Michael H. Geczy, 3 Dec 1999  
LTC Jon A. Norman Nov. 9, 2001  
LTC David R. Stillwell May 30, 2003  
LTC Donovan E. Godier Jul. 15, 2005  
LTC Craig S. Leavitt Jun. 28, 2007  
LTC Lance A. Kildron Jul. 23, 2009  
LTC John E. Vargas Jr. Jun. 3, 2011  
LTC Matthew L. Ayers

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

World War II

American Theater

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II  
Air Offensive, Europe  
Normandy  
Northern France  
Rhineland  
Ardennes-Alsace  
Central Europe  
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Southwest Asia  
Defense of Saudi Arabia  
Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

**Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation  
Central Germany, 8 Apr 1944

**Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards**

1 Jul 1956–30 Sep 1957  
1 May 1963–31 Dec 1964  
1 Jan 1965–31 Mar 1966  
1 Jul 1968–31 Mar 1970  
1 Sep 1970–30 Jun 1972  
31 Mar 1973–30 Jun 1974  
1 Jul 1977–30 Jun 1979  
1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1983  
1 Jul 1987–30 Jun 1989  
1 Jul 1990–30 Jun 1992

**EMBLEM**



77<sup>th</sup> PS & FS



1931 - 1950

77<sup>th</sup> FBS



1950 - 1958

77<sup>th</sup> TFS



1958 - 1991

77<sup>th</sup> FS



1991 - Present

On a Red disc bordered Black, five playing spot-cards arranged fanwise from dexter to sinister, 7 clubs, 7 diamonds, ace of spades, 7 hearts and 7 spades, proper. **SIGNIFICANCE** Due to the shortage of both pilots and airplanes the squadron resorted to two ship elements for training purposes, and it is believed that this was the origin of that formation. This formation later gave birth to the idea for the squadron insignia which consists of five playing cards arranged left to right in the order: 7 clubs, 7 diamonds, Ace of Spades, 7 hearts, 7 spades. Its significance being that five cards represent the five years' expansion program of the Air Corps, by virtue of which the squadron was brought into being and that five pilots were assigned at the time of the arrival of the first airplanes. Two sets of cards in pairs, was typical of the formation used during the organization period, the seven being generally a lucky number. The ace of spades has ever been the symbol of death and the spade predominates as a warning to all enemies. Lastly, the design is typical of the life of a pursuit pilot in actual combat just a gamble. (Approved, 29 Aug 1931)

#### **MOTTO**

Once a gambler, always a gambler

***Big Red Machine***

#### **NICKNAME**

#### **OPERATIONS**

Apparently a flying training unit, 1918.

The squadron was organized Feb. 20 1918, as the 77th Aero Squadron at Waco Field, Texas. The squadron was demobilized in November 1918, but was reactivated and consolidated with the 77th Observation Squadron in October 1927. In 1929, the squadron was redesignated the 77th Pursuit Squadron and reorganized as one of the first tactical units of the 20th Pursuit Group at Mather Field, Calif., with an officer strength of four.

Constituted in the Regular Army on 18 October 1927 as the 77th Observation Squadron and allotted to the Eighth Corps Area. Organized on 16 May 1928 as a RAI unit with Organized Reserve personnel at Dallas, TX. Conducted annual summer training at Love Field or Hensley Field, TX. Redesignated as the 77th Pursuit Squadron on 8 May 1929 and assigned to the 18th Pursuit Group. Activated on 15 November 1930, less Reserve personnel, at Mather Field, CA as the first tactical unit of the 20th Pursuit Group, coming into being as an actual combat units with four officers, First Lieutenant Walter E. Richards being the first commanding officer.

Relieved from assignment to the 18th Pursuit Group on 15 June 1932 and assigned to the 20th Pursuit Group. Transferred on 14 October 1932 to Barksdale Field, LA. Consolidated in October 1936 with the 77th Aero Squadron (a WWI unit organized on 20 February 1918; redesignated as Squadron A, Barron Field, TX, 21 July 1918; demobilized on 18 November 1918 at Barron Field, TX; reconstituted in October 1936). Awarded the Frank Luke Trophy for 1937 and 1938.



Transferred on 19 November 1939 to Moffett Field, CA. Redesignated as the 77th Pursuit Squadron (Fighter) on 6 December 1939. Transferred on 9 September 1940 to Hamilton Field, CA. Redesignated as the 77th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) on 12 March 1941.

In January 1943, the 77th settled at March Field, Calif., in time to be reassigned to England and the European Theater of Operations during World War II. The 77th, now designated a fighter squadron, arrived at Northamptonshire, England, in August 1943, flying the P-38. The 77th entered combat operations in November 1943, flying combat missions until April 25, 1945, when, armed with P-51 Mustangs, they began escorting "heavies" to Pilzen, Czechoslovakia, in one of the last raids of the war.

The 77th was instrumental in the 20th achieving its record "kill" of 432 enemy aircraft, 400 locomotives, 1,555 freight cars, 94 ammunition cars and 536 motor vehicles destroyed. The 77th left King's Cliffe, England, and was deactivated in October 1945.

The 77th and the 20th were reactivated in July 1946 at Biggs Field, Texas. Between 1946 and 1952 the squadron moved to Shaw Field, S.C., and then to Langley Air Force Base, Va., becoming the 77th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and transitioning to the F-84.

8 May 1947 A North American P-51D-30-NA Mustang, 44-74652, of the 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group, based at Shaw Field, South Carolina, crashes at noon near Cassatt, South Carolina in Kershaw County. Col. W. M. Turner, executive officer at Shaw Field, said that ambulances and firefighting equipment went to the scene but that his information was that the pilot, Max J. Christensen, was not injured. He said that he was awaiting a full report on the crash.

In May 1952, the 77th and the 20th were reassigned to Royal Air Force Wethersfield, England. In 1957, the squadron transitioned to the F-100 and a year later was designated a tactical fighter squadron flying the "Hun" for 11 more years in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization commitment.

4 April 1960 A USAF North American F-100D-65-NA Super Sabre, 56-2994, of the 77th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 20th Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Wethersfield, Essex, crashed into mud flats at the Holbeach Range in eastern England, killing pilot 1st Lt. Thomas R. Winsford. A cause was never clearly determined.

In 1969, the 77th and the 20th began moving to RAF Upper Heyford and converted to the fighter-bomber version of the F-111.

F-111 68-0045 was delivered to the USAF on August 20, 1970. It is seen here in June 1979, wearing the red tail cap of the 77th TFS, 20th TFW. While assigned to the 20th TFW, 68-0045 crashed and was destroyed on December 12, 1979 near Boston (Line.) UK. The aircraft was lost after range entry, when it plowed deep into coastal mud. No ejection was attempted. Captain

Randolph Gaspard and Major Frank Slusher were killed. When the aircraft crashed, it had accumulated 766 flights and 2,126.9 flight hours.

F-111 68-0057 The aircraft was delivered to the USAF on November 21, 1970. 68-0045 is seen here in September 1972, wearing JT, the 77th TFS squadron tail code. While assigned to the 20th TFW, 68-0057 crashed and was destroyed on April 29, 1980, near RAF Bentwaters. The spoilers extended during a formation descent in the weather, and the aircrew lost control and ejected. The pilot, Captain Jack A. Mines and WSO, Captain Richard J. Franks, were killed. When lost, the aircraft had accumulated 801 flights and 2,241.2 flight hours.

F-111 68-0060 The aircraft was delivered to the USAF on November 30, 1970. 68-0060 is seen here in November 1972, wearing the red tail cap of the 77th TFS, 20th TFW. While assigned to the 20th TFW, 68-0060 crashed and was destroyed on November 5, 1975 near RAF Upper Heyford following a birdstrike. The bird penetrated the windscreen, causing loss of control. The crew, pilot Captain Steiber and WSO Captain Robert Gregory, ejected successfully, with one crew member receiving a major injury to his back. When the aircraft crashed, it had accumulated 407 flights and 1,204.3 flight hours.

The squadron, flying the F-16, reorganized and incorporated 250 maintainers on Feb. 1, 1992. The 77th was inactivated Sept. 30, 1993, then transferred and reactivated at Shaw AFB, S.C., on Jan. 1, 1994. In 1996, the 77th deployed to Southwest Asia.

11 July 1996 An General Dynamics F-16C Block 50C Fighting Falcon, *91-0354*, of the 77th Fighter Squadron, being relocated from Shaw AFB, South Carolina, to Eglin AFB, Florida, to avoid Hurricane Bertha, crashes at 1530 hrs. into a neighborhood 20 miles N of Pensacola, Florida, following an engine failure, striking two homes and killing a four-year old boy. A man and woman in the house suffered burns. The pilot was forced to eject two miles short of the runway. The pilot was uninjured. The accident investigation showed foreign object damage to a fan blade caused a crack seven thousandths of an inch (too small to visually spot). The blade was ingested into the engine. The engine had failed three times during the flight with two relights. With the third engine failure the pilot ditched the aircraft into what he hoped was an unpopulated area, and ejected at only 200 feet.

In 1999 and 2001, the 77th deployed to Southwest Asia flying missions over Iraq in support of Operation Northern Watch. The squadron also deployed in support of Operations Allied Force and Desert Fox in 1999. In 1997 and 2000, the 77th deployed to Southwest Asia flying missions over Iraq in support of Operation Southern Watch.

On 06 July 2001, at 1435 Zulu/1035 local time, while performing Basic Fighter Maneuvers (BFM), the mishap pilot (MP) initiated ejection from the mishap aircraft (MA), F-16CJ, Serial Number 90-0815. The MP, assigned to 77 FS, Shaw AFB, South Carolina, suffered fetal injuries during the ejection sequence. The MA impacted the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina, and was destroyed. There is clear and convincing evidence that the pilot suffered from G-induced loss of consciousness (G-LOC) that resulted in the mishap aircraft

being put into unrecoverable flight parameters from which the pilot ejected and sustained fatal injuries. The mishap aircraft impacted the ocean and was destroyed. The mishap engagement was a 2.5 nautical mile (NM) high aspect BFM set-up, where the MP initially positioned his aircraft 2.5 NM behind the mishap instructor pilot (MIP) to start with an offensive advantage. The engagement began at 16,500 feet above ground level (AGL) and 450 knots. At 19 seconds into the engagement, the MP initiated a high-G, descending left turn to retain his offensive advantage. At 24 seconds, passing through 7,500 feet AGL and approximately 460 knots, the MP stabilized at 45-60 degrees nose low and 35-45 degrees left bank with no reaction to radio calls from the MIP. This unresponsiveness after the initiation of a high-G turn in an environment where the G-loading can be sustained for long periods of time is characteristic of a G-LOC. Historical experience with G-LOC incidents indicates an average incapacitation of 24 seconds, during which the victim may be totally unresponsive to external inputs. The MIP, in view of the deteriorating situation, assessed that the MA was no longer in a position to recover safely and commanded the MP to "bail-out." The MIP observed the MP eject immediately after making the "bail-out" call. This is again consistent with G-LOC symptoms, wherein the victim may regain some consciousness after a period of incapacitation. Ejection was initiated at approximately 1,500 feet AGL and 550-600 knots, 60 degrees nose low, and 30 degrees left bank. Under those conditions, serious flailing injury can and in most cases does occur. During the high-speed ejection, the MP sustained a blunt impact to the head that proved fatal. Had the MP not attempted the ejection, he would have impacted the water with the MA. The MA impacted the water in excess of 640 knots at approximately 60 degrees of dive and 30 degrees of left bank, with the throttle just below military power.

From July to Sept. 2002, the 77th deployed to Operation Northern Watch. In February 2003, the squadron deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

4/19/2005 An F-16D from here crashed April 18 near Charleston, S.C. At the time of the accident, the pilots, Maj. Steve Granger and Lt. Col. Maurice Salcedo, had just begun a training mission. They ejected safely into a river near Charleston and were taken to a local hospital where they were treated and released. The pilots are attached to the 77th Fighter Squadron, and the aircraft was assigned to the 55th Fighter Squadron.

On 15 October 2009 at 2024:09 local time, two F-16CM aircraft, tail numbers 91-0364 and 91-0365, assigned to the 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Wing, Shaw Air Force Base (AFB) South Carolina collided over the Atlantic Ocean in Warning Area 161 approximately 126 nautical miles southeast of Shaw AFB. The mishap pilot (MP2) in aircraft 91-0365 died upon collision and did not attempt to eject. Aircraft 91-0365 impacted the water and was destroyed. There was no damage to private property. The other mishap pilot (MP1), in aircraft 91-0364, was uninjured. Aircraft 91-0364 had moderate damage to flight control surfaces and external stores. MP1 landed safely at Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

The purpose of the mishap mission was night Close Air Support training to prepare MP2 for possible Air Expeditionary Force deployment and to complete his familiarization with the Advanced Targeting Pod. The flight was conducted in accordance with applicable service and unit guidelines. Both mishap pilots were current and qualified to perform the mission. MP1 was

an experienced instructor pilot. MP2 had 126.1 hours in the F-16. Because he had less than 500 hours, he was considered inexperienced in the F-16.

At the time of the mishap, the flight was returning to Shaw AFB and MP2 was rejoining on MP1, the flight lead. The Accident Investigation Board (AIB) President found, by clear and convincing evidence, this mishap was caused by MP2's improper night rejoin. Specifically, MP2 failed to reduce airspeed and establish the appropriate flight path vector, as recommended by Air Force guidance. The AIB President also found that channelized attention substantially contributed to the mishap. Channelized attention occurs when an individual focuses all attention on a limited number of cues to the exclusion of others of a higher priority. MP2 experienced a radar failure during the rejoin, which diverted his attention from recognizing and correcting the airspeed and flight path errors.

An F-16 pilot's failure to perceive mountainous terrain in his flight path caused the crash that took his life on April 3 in Afghanistan, announced Air Combat Command. The aircraft crashed into a mountainside 10 nautical miles southeast of Bagram Airfield; the pilot did not attempt to eject, states ACC's Aug. 26 release that summarizes the findings in ACC's newly issued accident investigation board report. The pilot, operating with Bagram's 77th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, was the flight lead of two F-16s supporting ground forces on that day. He was deployed to Afghanistan from Shaw AFB, S.C. The crash destroyed the F-16 and its on-board munitions, an estimated loss of \$30.9 million, states the release. 2013

Capt. William H. Dubois, 30, an F-16 pilot assigned to the 77th Fighter Squadron at Shaw AFB, S.C., was killed Dec. 1 after his fighter crashed "near a coalition air base in the Middle East." Dubois had taken off on a combat mission around 11 p.m. on Nov. 30 in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, the US-led air campaign against ISIS terrorists in Iraq and Syria, but was attempting to return to an undisclosed operating location in the region shortly after takeoff when the aircraft crashed. "Losing Capt. Dubois is sad and tragic. Our most sincere condolences go out to his family, friends, and squadron members during this difficult time," said Col. Stephen Jost, 20th Fighter Wing commander. "Capt. Dubois was a patriot who was willing to put his life on the line every day in service to his nation. He was a valued airman, pilot, and friend ... [and] he will be greatly missed." Dubois was the first airman killed while supporting OIR. A marine was killed in October after he bailed out of an MV-22 that was experiencing difficulties in the air. The crash was the Air Force's first announced loss of a combat aircraft supporting OIR since the beginning of the operation in September, according to officials.

The F-16 pilot killed during an Operation Inherent Resolve sortie last December violated the safe minimum altitude for landing approach, was briefly disoriented, and flew into the ground. The investigation board president determined "by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the mishap was the mishap pilot's unrecognized descent into the ground. The F-16, which was deployed to an undisclosed base in the Middle East, was returning from an abortive sortie with his wingman, who had suffered a minor mechanical malfunction, Dec. 1, 2014, when he crashed 9.5 nautical miles short of the runway. The board determined the pilot "intentionally flew below" the minimum safe altitude, beginning his landing approach "against instrument procedures." This significantly reduced his reaction time, contributing to the accident. The aircraft was assigned to the 77th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron deployed from

Shaw AFB, S.C., at the time of the accident. Destruction of the aircraft and its weapons is estimated at a \$30.8-million loss.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit yearbook. *10<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Wing and 45<sup>th</sup> Air Base. USAAC Hamilton Field, CA. 1941*