



TIGERS and DEVILS

Photography by Rick Linares
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The New Jersey Guard keeps its airmen, KC-135s, and F-16s ready for action.



F-16Cs of the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing—nick-named "Jersey Devils"—assemble to refuel over North Carolina. They were en route to a Combat Archer air-to-air weapons employment evaluation at Tyndall AFB, Fla., on May 1.

The New Jersey Air National Guard's flying units—the 177th Fighter Wing at Atlantic City and the 108th Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst—give the state both firepower and reach. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the 177th's F-16s took to the skies over the Eastern seaboard for combat air patrols—later named Operation Noble Eagle—reassuming a NORAD aerospace control alert tasking. It was charged to defend Philadelphia, and even New York City, if called on. Last year, New Jersey's F-16s

deployed on a Pacific theater security package with the District of Columbia ANG to South Korea and Australia, and this summer headed to Bulgaria for Exercise Thracian Star. The 108th recently shed its air refueling wing designation, though it still flies tankers as one of its many missions. Guardsmen and KC-135s from the 108th departed in June for operations in Afghanistan. [1] The 177th's flagship, No. 86-0333—jokingly dubbed "Triple Cripple" by maintainers because of its reputation for needing frequent repairs—received special markings on

its tail depicting Atlantic City's beachfront skyline. [2] A1C Lucas Dowling (left) and MSgt. Frank Dilberto Jr. ready a 108th KC-135 on the McGuire flight line. [3] F-16 pilots Maj. Michael Kawan (foreground), Col. Bradford Everman, Capt. Michael Gallinoto, and Lt. Col. Jared Humbert (l-r) go over notes at the 177th's operations facility in June. [4] Avionics specialists A1C Brandon Debarth (left) and SrA. David Gallagher, 177th Maintenance Group, troubleshoot systems at Atlantic City Airport in Egg Harbor Township, N.J.



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The 177th Fighter Wing's lineage goes back to 1917, as the 119th Aero Squadron, a World War I Active Duty training squadron. [1] A 108th AW KC-135R taxis out for a refueling sortie from McGuire, emblazoned with the unit's "Tigers" mascot on the tail. [2] 177th Operations Group commander Everman reviews aircraft maintenance forms with crew chief A1C Shane Dietrich before a launching at Atlantic City. [3] SrA. Mostafa Eldasher of the air refueling wing's 108th Maintenance Group shows off the tail flash on a unit KC-135's towering vertical stabilizer. [4] Capt. Brian Bradke and Maj. Jason Halversen break away from the boom on the flight to Florida, June 1. Like most ANG F-16 units, the 177th's 119th Fighter Squadron maintains a pair of two-seat F-16Ds for check and training rides, public outreach, and the occasional incentive ride.



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The 108th Wing traces its origins to 1928, with the organization of the 119th Observation Squadron. As the wing fact sheet puts it, "The mission continuously changes." Its varied units now include the 204th Intelligence Squadron and the 108th Contingency Response Group, and it operates discreet executive airlift with a small fleet of C-32s. |1| Crew chief Dilberto marshals forward a 108th KC-135 tanker at McGuire during launch-out on a mission to refuel the state's F-16s. |2| The 177th's F-16 Block 30s are upgrading to the Helmet-Mounted Integrated Targeting (HMIT) system. It improves a pilot's situational awareness and enhances weapons employment. In this photo, though, pilot 1st Lt. Wesley Womble still sports the old-style helmet. |3| Just before a sortie, crew chiefs SrA. John Koster and MSgt. Bryan Hicken (l-r at the fuselage) give a 177th F-16 a second look during an end-of-runway check with weapons troops SrA. Desmond Charles (far left) and A1C Viviana Lara (far right). |4| KC-135 boom operator MSgt. Edwin Montalvo prepares to make contact with an F-16.

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[1] A “clean” F-16, flown by Gallinoto and configured without external fuel tanks, gets airborne from Atlantic City in June. Jets are usually configured with a pair of 370-gallon wing tanks to extend their flying time. Alert jets often sport a 300-gallon centerline tank, sacrificing range for enhanced agility. [2] TSgt. Joseph Searle, an aircrew flight technician, checks a parachute for repacking into the pilot’s ACES II ejection seat in an Atlantic City Airport backshop. [3] This version of the Rigger Pledge bears a 1956 date.



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- I WILL** keep constantly in mind that until men grow Wings their Parachutes must be Dependable.
- I WILL** pack every Parachute as though I am to Jump with it myself, and will stand ready to Jump with any Parachute which I have certified as properly inspected and packed.
- I WILL** remember always that the other man's Life is as dear to him as mine is to me.
- I WILL** never resort to Guesswork, as I know that Chance is a fool's god and that I, a parachute Rigger cannot depend on it.
- I WILL** never pass over any Defect, nor neglect any Repair, no matter how small, as I know that omissions and mistakes in the Repair and Packing of a Parachute may cost a Life.
- I WILL** keep all Parachute equipment entrusted to my care in the best possible condition, remembering always that Little Things left undone cause Major Troubles.
- I WILL** never sign my name to a Parachute Inspection or packing Certificate unless I have Personally performed or directly supervised every step, and am entirely Satisfied with all the Work.
- I WILL** never let the idea that a piece of work is “good enough” make me a potential murderer through a careless mistake or oversight, for I Know there can be no compromise with Perfection.
- I WILL** keep always a wholehearted respect for my vocation, regarding it as a High Profession rather than a day-to-day task, and will keep in mind constantly my Grave Responsibility.
- I WILL** be SURE—Always

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[1] The two-ship formation leader—the aircraft of 119th Fighter Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Timothy Hassel—shows a pair of travel pods carrying aircraft support equipment required for a training deployment. **[2]** Weapons troop Lara inspects an inert AIM-120 during an end-of-runway check. **[3]** KC-135 crew chief TSgt. Raymond Demarco III waits to talk to the aircrew over the intercom set during a launch at McGuire.



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[1] Squadron commander Hassel (foreground) and Womble fly in formation. Aircraft No. 238 carries a Litening targeting pod. **[2]** Aircrew flight equipment specialist A1C Matthew Cruz finesses the HMIT “monocle”—essentially an in-helmet head-up display for the pilot. **[3]** Pilot Gallinoto “models” the new HMIT system. **[4]** Boom operator Montalvo secures cargo aboard a KC-135.

With the 177th Fighter Wing and the 108th Wing, the New Jersey ANG is unusual in conducting two completely different but complementary flying missions: operating both fighters and tankers. ✪