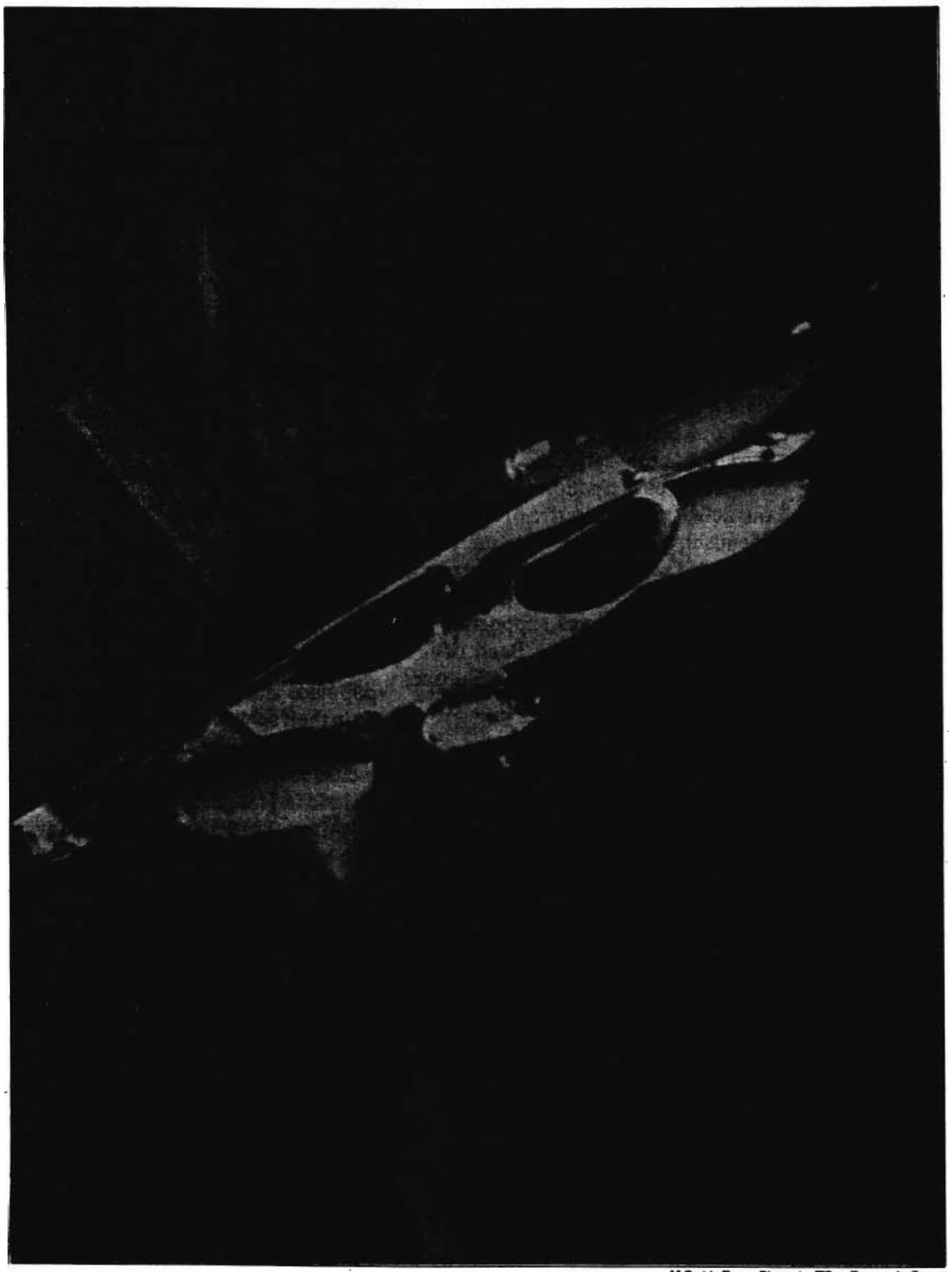
RAIDER

Commemorative Last Edition

May 1, 1992
Vol. 16, No. 24
Torrejon AB, Spain



U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Fernando Serna

End of an Era -- 401st Fighter Wing Fighting Falcons, like this one, will no longer fly over Spain. But their legacy of flight from Torrejon AB will live on.

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- **LAST RAIDER** The 401st Fighter Wing departs Monday, and the Raider goes with it. Look for the new four-page paper which will replace it. Adios Amigos from the Raider staff.

FESTIVITIES

401st FW's final hurrah unites all base members

The festivities to commemorate the departure of the 401st Fighter Wing from Torrejon AB continue until after the departure ceremony Monday.

The festivities, which started with a basewide sports day April 24, are the result of a collective effort.

"We jointly planned departure ceremony activities with our Spanish hosts to honor the significant contributions of the 401st FW to Torrejon," said Lt. Col. Willie McCladdie, 401st Combat Support Group deputy commander and departure ceremony project officer.

"It took some doing, but I'm extremely pleased with the planned festivities and invite everyone to get involved and personally support these events prior to the 401st's final curtain call on Monday."

A Spanish-American Sports day kicked off the festivities April 24. The day's events began with a farewell golf tournament at the Cottonwood Golf Course. Other sporting activities included competition in soccer, softball, tennis, volleyball and basketball.

"We got off to a great start. And we had a lot of people -- Spanish and American -- taking part. They had a great time," the colonel said.

Members from both the Spanish and American wings participated in friendly competition designed to strengthen friendships while exploiting the skills of each nation's national pastimes.

"All events were planned and tied by a common theme, 'Strength Through Unity,' because we appreciate the cooperation and extended hand of friendship our Spanish friends have shown throughout the years," McCladdie said.

"Their participation in these various activities is indicative of the strong friendships developed over the years. They also wanted to see if Americans really can play soccer," the colonel said.

As an added bonus, supporting the festivities musically, the Band of the United States Air Forces in Europe, The Ambassadors will play. Arriving from Germany, the jazz ensemble is set to perform two farewell concerts for the entire Torrejon AB community.

> **"All events were planned and tied by a common theme, 'Strength Through Unity,' because we appreciate the cooperation and extended hand of friendship our Spanish friends have shown."**
>
> **Lt. Col. Willie McCladdie**

"The Ambassadors will perform their first concert at the Royal Oaks Theater today at 7:30 p.m.," Capt. Shawn K. Mecham, 401st FW public affairs officer, said. "The scheduled two-hour concert will feature music which ranges from the smooth, melodic hits of the Swingin' 1940's to the modern jazz-rock sounds of the 1990's."

Arrangements and featured soloists perform selections from the libraries of Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Buddy Rich and many others, according to the captain.

Sunday, the Ambassadors perform for the Torrejon base community at the La Cita Recreation Center at 7:30 p.m. "Both performances are free of charge and open to the public," Mecham said.

Monday, the 401st Fighter Wing's joint Spanish-American Departure Ceremony begins at 10 a.m. on the flightline, directly in front of Hangar 6.

The ceremony is open to the base populace and people are reminded to be in their seats no later than 9:30 a.m., according to McCladdie. In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in Hangar 5, at the same time.

After the departure ceremony, a free base picnic is set for Raider Park from noon until 4 p.m. "Everyone on Torrejon is invited to attend, and there will be music too," Mecham said.

Besides the free food and soft drinks, beer will be served for a small charge. American and Spanish food is on the menu for the day. In case of inclement weather, the picnic will move indoors to La Cita.

Raider

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The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the public affairs office of the 401st Fighter Wing, Torrejon AB, Spain, U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

The Raider uses Air Force News Service, Armed Forces Press Service and U.S. Air Forces in Europe news material. All photos are U.S. Air Force photos unless otherwise stated.

Photo coverage is provided by 401st Communications Squadron. Contributions for the Raider should be submitted to the public affairs office, Bldg. 105, Room 236, Friday one week prior to publication date. Address: 401FW/PA, APO AE 09641. Phone numbers: DSN 723-5050/5051 or commercially 665-5050/5051. The Raider is printed by Unigrafias, S.A. Ctra. de Loeches, 29, Torrejon de Ardoz. Dep. Leg. M9-824-1971.

Raider Editorial Staff:

Commander, 401st FW -- Col. Jerry L. Nelson
Chief, Public Affairs -- Capt. Shawn K. Mecham
NCOIC, Public Affairs -- TSgt. Louis A. Arano-Berrades
NCOIC, PA Plans & Programs -- Sgt. Debbie Aragon
Editor -- SrA. Bob Crenshaw

FINAL WORDS

Nelson: 'Closing 401st isn't the end of the world -- it's the end of an era.'

by SrA. Bob Crenshaw
401st FW Public Affairs Office

Spain has a different affect on everybody who visits its soil, and Col. Jerry L. Nelson, 401st Fighter Wing commander, is no different.

"What a change it's been in the last year. You wouldn't recognize this place from a year ago," said Nelson, recalling the hustle and bustle of Torrejon AB during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

"The intensity a year ago was like nothing I'd seen anywhere, as was the enthusiasm and support we were getting. Now, it echoes around here with so few people around, and the intensity gone. It's kind of too quiet."

Nelson, who started out as the assistant deputy commander for operations nearly four years ago, said he has learned many things and has several fond memories of his time at Torrejon.

"Throughout my 26 years in the Air Force, I'd heard of Torrejon, and wondered what it would be like," said Nelson. "After four wonderful years here, it's taught me a lot about Spain, NATO, the mission and people. When I think of Torrejon now, I think of all the challenges we faced together -- and the successes we've had during the past year or so.

"I've had five jobs in my four years here," the colonel said, "and I have enjoyed every single one of them and the challenges they presented, such as the tactical evaluations we were doing three years ago. That was our job. The successes we had during those tac evals convinced the world we were ready and contributed to the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War. That was as much of a battle as the hot war down in the Gulf.

U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Louis A. Arana-Barradas

Nelson: "After four wonderful years here, it's taught me a lot about Spain, NATO, the mission and people."

"I'm going to remember all those things," he said. "I have recorded every day here on a card, and I'll have them with me for the rest of my life. Then, I can look back on those days and reflect on them."

Madrid, Spain is quite a drastic change from Montpelier, Idaho, were Nelson was born and raised, but he has "grown to like Spain." Commenting on Madrid as "one of the most beautiful cities in the world," the people, culture and the fine weather, he said, "Spain has it all."

As to how much the 401st Fighter Wing will be missed in the future is still unseen; but Nelson said it all depends on the political climate of NATO.

"It's hard to say how much NATO will miss us, because I don't know what the political situation will be," he said. "But, if we still need a NATO in the future, we still need a 401st and I think we need it somewhere in the Southern region. Torrejon certainly proved the value of its location. If the 401st is somewhere else, it's going to be hard to duplicate the strategic location we had in Spain."

Colonel Nelson will be heading to Hill AFB, Utah, as the chief, F-16 Systems Program Management Division at the Ogden Air Logistics Center.

"Ruth and I would like to pass our sincere thanks to every member of the wing who made the past four years truly memorable. It's been our best assignment," he said.

"The people have been outstanding, and we've made some life-long relationships. We're looking forward to seeing whoever stops by.

"Closing the 401st isn't the end of the world -- it's the end of an era," he said. "We look forward to the challenges ahead, and wish Godspeed to everyone."

GOODBYE, SIR

Torrejon enlisted corps bids farewell to their departing wing commander

by TSgt. Louis A. Arana-Barradas
401st FW Public Affairs Office

Col. Jerry L. Nelson tells a story about a vivid memory he has of one particular day when he was a boy growing up in the mountains of Idaho.

He said that while sitting atop an old gray mare, as he and his slightly older uncle were herding cows, they both looked up into the sky and saw the contrails of an airplane flying overhead.

"Seeing a contrail in the early '50s was something to behold," the 401st Fighter Wing commander said. "And we both said, 'some day we're going to do that. That was our dream."

Many years later (April 22), and what must have seemed like a million miles from his beloved Idaho, the colonel was a guest at a luncheon sponsored by the Minister of Foreign Affairs for North America and Asia. As he recounts the event, he said it was at a beautiful Madrid club and in attendance was the American ambassador to Spain, the Spanish air force chief of staff and other important people.

"I felt like this boy from the mountains of Idaho was out of place," he said. "I was awe-struck by the occasion."

"I'll always remember that event," he said.

But addressing a capacity crowd of Torrejon AB enlisted members at a farewell breakfast they held in his honor April 23 at the Novedades Inn Dining Facility, he said, he was "serious as a heart attack" when he said those events didn't "even come close to this."

Heartfelt emotion, sadness and misty eyes were evident at the breakfast, which was hosted by CMSgt. Robert E. Then, wing senior enlisted advisor.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I'd be standing here before this group today.

"Flying airplanes is great," he said, "But being able to command a unit like the 401st and to work with people like you just beats the wildest dream I ever had -- including that one on the old gray mare."

That morning, the colonel was inducted into the Torrejon AB Chiefs Group by CMSgt. Larry D. Padgett, the group's acting president. He said there was a good reason they voted to make the colonel "one of them."

"When the chief's group was looking for the straight answers to give the enlisted folks, we asked Colonel Nelson to have breakfast with us -- to sit down and discuss the issues.

"We didn't always agree, but when we left, we always had the straight answer," Padgett said. "For that, we were deeply appreciative," he told Nelson.

"We thank you for what you've done for the enlisted folks; we appreciated your leadership during some very difficult times and we wish you the best of luck and Godspeed on your new assignment."

The base's First Sergeants Council made the colonel an honorary first sergeant and presented him with a plaque. "The first sergeants decided that after all the time they worked with Colonel Nelson, it was time he got promoted to the rank of first sergeant," the council's MSgt. Dutch Muys said.

Nelson was presented with some mementos, including a photograph of the last F-16 Fighting Falcon, which he piloted, to take off from Torrejon. And knowing his fondness of golf, the enlisted troops also gave him a gag gift -- a toy golf bag, clubs and balls.

The final memento, presented to the colonel by Then on behalf of the entire base enlisted corps, was a replica of Christopher Columbus' sword.

Before he said goodbye, Nelson had one final bit of advice for his troops on a subject dear to his heart.

"On my wall, just before the movers came, right at the front door, was a framed needlepoint plaque, and it says 'Come Home With Honor.'" He said it was there to remind his family that when they went out the door they were to come home with honor.

And while he commanded the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional) at Doha, Qatar, during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, that statement became a wing theme.

"And it (the theme) certainly applies today -- to all of us in this room, to all those who have come and gone from the 401st Fighter Wing," he said.

"It has been more than an honor than you could possibly imagine to associate with you. I thank God for that opportunity."

Nelson said he will cherish the mementos given him and that he'd be disappointed if people didn't come by and shake his hand if they crossed paths at his next assignment at Hill AFB, Utah. "I mean that sincerely," he said in parting. "Thank you very much and may God bless all of you."

His troops gave him a standing ovation.

U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Ron Rush

Final salute: Col. Wade L. Paton, 401st Fighter Wing deputy commander for operations, gives a final salute before taking off in one of the last F-16s to leave Spain.

IN & OUT

Colonel starts, finishes F-16 tenure at Torrejon

by Sgt. Debbie Aragon
401st FW Public Affairs

His emotions ran high that warm, sunny day in March 1983, just as they did on that cold, overcast day almost exactly 9 years later.

Col. Wade L. Paton, opened the chapter of F-16 flight at Torrejon AB, delivering one of the first operational aircraft to the 401st Fighter Wing March 19, 1983. He also closed it -- flying one of the final four F-16s assigned to the wing from Spanish soil March 24, 1992.

It was a beautiful day, with clear blue sky when Paton, then a major, and the other four pilots in the five-ship flight were preparing to land for the first time on Torrejon's runway.

Three days earlier, they had taken off from the General Dynamics facilities in Fort Worth, Texas. From there, they headed to Shaw AFB, S.C., and finally, after several days of aborts due to bad weather, began their eight and one-half hour flight to Spain.

"I was excited to be coming to Torrejon," Paton, 401st Fighter Wing deputy commander for operations said. "Spain has a great environment to fly in and I was really looking forward to it."

As alternate flight lead, Paton's aircraft was to be the third to touch down.

The first F-16 landed without incident. The same couldn't be said for aircraft number two -- the pilot had forgotten to lower the landing gear and it skidded to a stop on its belly.

Because of this, what should have been a historic event at Torrejon, with the 401st FW receiving its first five operational F-16s, ended with three of the aircraft being diverted to Getafe AB on the south-eastern corner of Madrid, about 10 miles from Torrejon.

Although arrival of the aircraft didn't go exactly as planned, Paton and the other two pilots, as well as the F-16s, made it back to Torrejon the next day.

World order has changed since that day, particularly within the last several years -- words like 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' entered the world's vocabulary, the Berlin Wall crumbled as the Cold War began its thaw, and Arabs and Jews sat at the same table talking peace.

Those and many other changes are part of the reason the 401st FW finds itself in the position it's in today.

"I was looking forward to flying the airplane on that last sortie," Paton said. "But, I wasn't looking forward to it because of the significance of us taking the final four aircraft out of Spain. It made me feel a little sober.

"It's an end of an era, but on the other hand, it's a sign of the times," according to the colonel. "We've done our jobs, and that's one of the main reasons we're leaving."

During Paton's time at Torrejon, he made many friends and feels he enjoyed a very good relationship with his Spanish comrades.

"Perhaps our relationship with the Spanish air force was best shown where, unfortunately, everyone didn't get to see it," Paton said.

During that final flight over Spanish soil, on the way to the French border, four Spanish F-18s escorted the U.S. Air Force F-16s. "As we were approaching the border," Paton said, "Colonel (Francisco Jose Gomez) Carretero, the Spanish air force 12th Wing commander told us 'It was a great experience my friends, adios.' The four F-18s, two on each side of our formation, rocked their wings. We rocked ours to them and then they peeled away from us like sets of fans.

"What a great way to go out," Paton said.

Editor's note: *Paton's flight out of Spain may well have been his last. His next assignment, to Kirtland AFB, N.M., is a non-flying position. But, according to the colonel, he hopes to fly again. But, if not, he's been able to do non-stop flying for 22 years and he believes in the future Air Force, many pilots won't have the opportunity to do that.*

ADIOS, AMIGOS

El Coronel Jefe
del Ala 12 y Comandante de la
Base Aérea de Torrejón de Ardoz

Monday, an important chapter for Torrejon AB closes; the end of the presence of a significant U.S. Air Force unit at this base after 26 years. A long period of time, during which the Spanish Air Force and the U.S. Air Force worked together for the benefit of peace and world stability.

The 401st Fighter Wing has been the unit that almost monopolized permanence on Torrejon throughout that period; and also, the most representative one, because of its activity among all other units stationed at Torrejon and all the Spanish national territory.

Today, the men and women of the 401st, along with their families, can rightly feel proud because their efforts and their presence here had a positive meaning and result. The recent developments in the world we have lived through are just a sample of that. But they have also brought closer together, on a personal level, two institutions -- the U.S. Air Force and the Spanish Air Force and, definitely, our respective countries.

Today, as the time for departure nears, I pledge that these ties will grow stronger in the future. I also wish all the best, both professionally and personally, to all those who are leaving.

For the 12th Wing and Torrejon AB, the 401st will always remain in a prominent place in their history and in the hearts of its people.

May God bless you all.

Francisco José Gómez Carretero,
Colonel, Spanish Air Force,
Commander

WING LEGACY

Fighter's engine whine now memory; but wing history continues into future

by TSgt. Louis A. Arana-Barradas
401st FW Public Affairs Office

The sleek and sexy F-16C Fighting Falcons, which once took off from Torrejon AB to zoom through Spanish skies, are gone now.

Since March 24, their distinctive engine whine is just a memory.

Now, their parent unit, the 401st Fighter Wing, follows suit, as it pursues its fighters on a journey into the pages of the wing's continuing history.

Because Monday, after 26 years of service at Torrejon, the 401st FW also departs -- perhaps to reappear, like the mythical phoenix, at a yet-to-be-determined location.

It's not the first time the unit has moved, and if its past history holds true, it probably won't be the last.

But all are not sad, because the 401st FW's illustrious history spanned six decades of distinguished peace and wartime service. Like many times before, when it was time for change, it moved on.

In the beginning

The snazzy jets flown by wing pilots over Spain are a far cry from the lumbering -- yet majestic -- B-17 Flying Fortresses their predecessors first flew. For the wing's parent unit, the 401st Bombardment Group (Heavy), was born into a world at war and weaned on mortal combat.

It all began March 20, 1943, when the old War Department created the group, though it was only a "paper" unit until April 1, 1943. That's when it was activated at Ephrata Army AB, Wash., along with its four bombardment squadrons, the 612th, 613th, 614th and 615th.

The group remained at Ephrata just long enough to get its people and equipment and transferred to Geiger Field, Wash., June 25 to begin B-17 flight training. Three weeks later, it relocated to Great Falls AAB, Mont., for more training. This lasted until Oct. 19, when the group took off for Deenethorpe, England, to join the war.

While aircrews hopped their bombers to England, support troops traveled there on the Queen Mary. On Nov. 3, the group reorganized and after three more weeks of training, they flew into harms way.

The group's first target, Nov. 26, was Bremen, Germany. The whole group was in the strike force. Poor weather prevented visual targeting, so group aircrews used new radar techniques to penetrate the heavy cloud cover and hit their marks. No aircraft were lost.

By the war's end, 401st crews had "rearranged" factories, oil refineries, power plants, V-1 and V-2 rocket sites, marshaling yards and port facilities throughout Europe. Late in the war, the group's mission changed to denying fuel to Nazi forces, and group bombers destroyed stocks in Holland, Luxembourg, Germany and France.

The group earned two Distinguished Unit Citations, the first for actions during a Jan. 11, 1944 raid on aircraft production plants at Oschersleben, Germany. The attack force, the largest launched by 8th Air Force up to that point in the war, met exceptionally heavy defenses, since the target was near Berlin. Enemy flak batteries, anti-aircraft artillery and fighters harassed the bombers for three hours. But even with all that, the mission was still a success.

The group's second DUC came for Feb. 20 action, when they again raided aircraft plants. This time, it was the Erla Maschinewerk near Leipzig. They encountered heavy flak but managed to accurately bomb the factory, which the Nazis had to close.

The group continued bombing industrial targets near Berlin during early 1944. The group then switched to bombing tactical targets, like coastal defense guns and transportation centers, in preparation for the Normandy invasion.

So, five minutes before the D-Day landing, group bombers were taking out gun emplacements less than 1,000 yards from the beach at one of the landing zones, among other missions that day.

Most of the group's actions after the June 6 invasion involved providing ground support, like attacks on tactical targets during the St. Lo breakthrough, the siege of Brest, the Battle of the Bulge, and the assault on the Rhine. During that time, the group also did strategic missions, primarily against oil reserves and the remnants of German industry.

The group flew its last combat mission April 20, 1945, against a marshaling yard in Brandenberg.

Apart from two DUCs, the unit earned campaign ribbons for the Air Offensive, Europe, as well as Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland and Central Europe.

The group returned to the United States after its victories in Europe, with its support troops leaving England May 30, 1945 -- this time on the Queen Elizabeth.

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Since the war with Japan still raged, the 401st began conversion to B-29 Super Fortress bombers when it arrived at Sioux Falls AAB, S.D. However, Japan fell before the group converted to the B-29. Caught up in the massive demobilization after V-J Day, it was inactivated Aug. 28, 1945.

Post war -- a new lease

Two years later, the group was reborn, redesignated the 401st Bombardment Group (Very Heavy) and activated as part of the air reserve forces at Brooks Field, Texas.

Its June 1949 move to Biggs AFB, Texas, brought a new name to the group, the 401st Bombardment Group (Medium). It remained with the reserves until May 1, 1951, when it rejoined the active forces and Strategic Air Command. But that was short-lived; it was inactivated June 25.

Reactivated again Feb. 8, 1954, it got another name -- the 401st Fighter-Bomber Group. Along with the 612th, 613th and 614th fighter-bomber squadrons, it moved to Alexandria (later England) AFB, La., and was attached to Tactical Air Command's 366th Fighter-Bomber Wing. The 615th FBS remained inactive.

The new mission brought a new plane to fly. It jumped into the jet age with the spunky F-86 Sabre. However, in 1955, the Sabres were replaced with older F-84 Thunderstreaks. During its early years at Alexandria, the group trained aircrews, participated in exercises and did occasional squadron rotations to Europe.

While at Alexandria, group members helped in the filming of the Hollywood movie, "The McConnell Story." Pilots of the 613th and 614th FBSs flew 125 sorties in F-84s painted to "act" as enemy MiG-15s, during the film's aerial combat sequences.

The 401st went back into F-86s June 30, 1956. Just one year later however, it began transitioning to F-100D Super Sabres, of which it received 57. Shortly afterward, the group's history ended.

A wing at last

That's because the 401st Fighter-Bomber Wing was constituted March 23, 1953, but again only on paper. It wasn't until Sept. 25, 1957 that the wing was actually activated, replacing the 401st FBG at England AFB, La.

U.S. Air Force Photo

In the beginning: Wing flew into World War II in majestic B-17G Flying Fortresses.

The activation was not a redesignation of the 401st FBG, which was inactivated. Rather, the new wing absorbed the group's flying squadrons -- including the now activated 615th FBS. And although the group had been attached to the 366th FBW, the new 401st FBW became the 366th FBW's equal.

On July 1, 1958, the wing was again redesignated as the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing -- and remained so for more than 30 years.

Wing activities remained relatively unchanged until the mid-1960s. It continued flying the F-100D and concentrated on maintaining combat-readiness. Wing aircrews took part in exercises -- stateside and overseas -- and were rotated to Europe and the Middle East to support NATO.

Some significant events happened during this period. The wing set a record for deployment from Langley AFB, Va., to Chaumont AB, France, in March 1958 -- its first non-stop deployment. One month later, it did it again -- in a record-breaking 7 hours and 13 minutes.

Then, in response to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the whole wing deployed to Homestead AFB, Fla., where it went on alert to respond to any emergency tasking caused by President John F. Kennedy's blockade of Cuba. When political tensions ended, the wing returned to England AFB, Dec. 5, 1962.

An "exceptional performance" in meeting TAC taskings earned the wing its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period of Jan. 1 to Dec. 21, 1963.

Then, in 1964, the wing went to war again -- in Vietnam.

Although the wing remained at England AFB, its squadrons rotated to Clark AB, the Philippines. Squadron aircrews also flew into combat from such deployed locations as Da Nang and Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam; Takhli AB, Thailand; and Tainan AB, Taiwan.

The mid-1960s brought several organizational changes. First, Nov. 3, 1965, the wing lost the 612th TFS, which was reassigned to Misawa AB, Japan. The 613th, 614th, and 615th TFSs remained.

However, the wing gained two more squadrons, though only attached, not assigned to the wing. It gained operational control of the 531st TFS Nov. 19, 1965, and the 90th TFS Dec. 5, 1965. However, the two units soon returned to their parent units.

Sunny Spain

Even more organizational change occurred in 1966. First, the 614th and 615th squadrons transferred to the 834th Air Division. On the same day, April 27, 1966, the wing was reassigned to Torrejon AB, Spain, as part of 16th Air Force.

It would remain there for 26 years.

Only the 613th TFS accompanied the wing to Torrejon. But, this didn't leave the

wing with only one flying squadron. Arriving in Spain, the wing gained the 307th and 353rd TFS, bringing it back to full strength.

All three squadrons flew the F-100D Super Sabre and operations at Torrejon quickly turned to maintaining combat readiness, rotating units to other bases in Europe and the Middle East, and participating in Air Force, NATO and Spanish air defense exercises. The wing served as the host American unit on the Spanish base, providing much of the support needed by other Air Force tenant units.

This type of operation continued relatively unchanged until Jan. 9, 1970, when the wing replaced its aging F-100s with F-4E "Phantom IIs." The change took place gradually, with the conversion not completed until 1972. At about the same time, the 612th and 614th squadrons rejoined the wing, returning from combat assignments at Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam. Both units were assigned to the 401st TFW July 15, 1971, replacing the 307th and 353rd squadrons, which departed the same date.

These assignments brought the wing back to its original structure, except for the absence of the 615th TFS, which was still assigned to the 35th TFW, in South Vietnam.

While the wing's structure changed, operations continued like before. In 1973, however, the 401st TFW gave up its F-4E's and received F-4C models. Although this represented a partial loss in combat capability for the wing, the exchange helped other units gain full contingents of the more advanced F-4E.

The wing's basic mission remained the same with the F-4C. It took part in joint exercises with the pre-revolution Iranian air force, as well as the French, Spanish, Italian and other European air forces, and other branches of the United States military. These activities continued after the upgrade of the wing's fleet to the F-4D aircraft in 1978.

Falcon fever

A new chapter in the wing's history began Feb. 5, 1983, when it began transitioning to the F-16 Fighting Falcon. The wing regained full operational capability Jan. 1, 1985.

Transition to the new jet contributed to the wing being awarded its second AFOUA for the period of July 1, 1983, to June 30, 1985.

Upgrading into one of the world's most advanced and versatile fighters gave wing pilots capabilities unprecedented in the unit's history, transforming it into one of the vital links in the defense of the United States and its allies.

Again the 401st upgraded, this time into F-16C and D models, in 1987 and 1988.

U.S. Air Force Photo

Falcons flight: A flight of 401st Fighter Wing F-16Cs fly in formation over Spain.

However, also in 1988, the governments of Spain and the United States announced the wing would depart Torrejon by May 4, 1992.

Not deterring, the unit plunged headfirst into Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The wing again proved itself -- as a combat force and by providing logistics support to deployed forces in the Persian Gulf region.

After Iraq invaded Kuwait, the 614th TFS deployed to Doha, Qatar, becoming the first American force ever in the country. There, squadron members, now part of the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing (Provisional), worked side-by-side with Qatari, British, Canadian and French forces. Squadron pilots flew 1,303 sorties and dropped 3.7 million pounds of bombs on Iraq's Republican Guard, armor, refineries and weapons factories before war's end.

The 612th followed a few weeks later, and became part of NATO's Joint Task Force "Proven Force," at Incirlik, Turkey. As part of the 7440th Composite Wing's 100 fighters, interceptors, tankers and jammers, unit aircrews helped cripple Iraq's logistics lines and take out its ballistic missiles. Squadron aircrews flew 1,093 combat missions, dropped 3.9 million pounds of bombs, and maintained a 1.3 percent abort rate – the lowest of the Gulf War.

But back at Torrejon things were hopping too. Wing organizations supported 10,000 MAC sorties carrying 85,000 troops and 130,000 tons of cargo transiting through the base on their way to, or from the Middle East.

The wing was awarded its third AFOUA for its operations from April 1, 1989 through March 31, 1991.

Then, with the Air Force's post-Desert Storm streamlining, the unit was again redesignated Oct. 1, 1991, this time as the 401st Fighter Wing.

In late 1991, the wing started implementing the drawdown plan agreed to by the signing in 1988 of the Agreement on Defense Cooperation between the United States and Spain, which called for the wing's departure from the base.

The 613th TFS was the first unit to inactivate and depart, starting June 28, 1991. The 612th TFS followed Sept. 25, 1991, and the 614th TFS left Dec. 30, 1991.

The 401st FW takes its final curtain call at Torrejon Monday.

TJ MEMORIES

Veterans recall how it used to be

by SrA. Bob Crenshaw
401st FW Public Affairs Office

The year was 1966 when the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing first made its appearance in Spain, but even then, it was not the first unit to grace Torrejon AB soil.

Construction of the flight line was finished in 1956, and believe it or not, some of the people you see every day on base were here then, watching history happen.

"There wasn't a thing on this base when I first saw it," said William Yanchuck, the manager of the base gas station. "I was stationed at Getafe AB (now a Spanish air force base, located about 10 miles from Madrid), working in the hospital. The first building to go up on Torrejon was the supply squadron building -- Bldg. 461 if I remember right. From then on, the buildings went up rapidly."

The base was not half as nice as it is now, he said. The buildings were painted a blinding white, and there were no sidewalks. The base exchange and commissary were located in downtown Madrid. Facilities were not as large as they are now; for example, the bookstore was said to be "only large enough for one guy to do his shopping, leave, and the next guy to enter."

Yanchuck retired from the Air Force in 1967 and has lived here since. He said a big reason he decided to stay was the easy Spanish living and their culture.

Another "Torrejon veteran" is retired TSgt. Leon "Pops" Lindsey. Pops also remembers Torrejon being built, and what Madrid and the surrounding areas were like then.

"When I first came here, the peseta exchange was different. You'd get about 43 pesetas to the dollar," he said. "But, in those days, rent was 3,500 pesetas a month, and a good meal for three people was 750 pesetas. Beer was 1 1/2 pesetas. Times were good.

"The people were different also," he said. "They lived like people do in rural towns. You'd walk down the street and say 'hi' to someone and they'd stop and say 'hello' back and tell you what was going on. Today, you say 'hi' and they keep going. They've got things to do, and so do you. It's just different. They've changed as Madrid became more modern.

"There were very few cars in the '50s and '60s," he said. "I remember driving down to Cine Madrid to watch a movie, and parking my car right in front of the theater. You can't even stop to let someone out of the car on that street anymore."

The Spanish culture was much more "laid back" up until the mid-70s, but there were a lot of standards for both Spanish citizens and military members, according to CMSgt. Louis G. Marquis, 16th Air Force senior enlisted advisor, who has been stationed at Torrejon for 14 years.

Women didn't smoke on the streets, and never wore shorts. Dresses were no shorter than knee length. To go off-base, military members had to wear coat and ties, and E-4s and below had a curfew of midnight.

"Dating was hard in those days," the chief said. "Initial meetings with young ladies were not easy, and dates had to be chaperoned at all times. And, of course, we had to meet their families."

Marquis said if the family liked you, you could do no wrong; yet, getting used to the Spanish families' customs could take some getting used to.

"I remember the first time I met my mother-in-law," he said. "They'd fixed a meal for me -- squid, in its own ink. I wasn't prepared for that. I ate it, but I wasn't prepared for it. But, if you gave me that same dish today, I'd eat and enjoy it."

Spain stayed pretty much that way until Francisco Franco's dictatorship dissolved, and democracy emerged. People began to express their views. Spain started a slow climb to being a contemporary with their neighbors, France, Italy, Germany and other European countries.

"I like Spain just as much as I did in the 1960s, but for different reasons," said Marquis. "The Spain of today is full of life. It's not just all sunshine ... there's tourism, fine cuisine, the culture ... the list goes on."

And, with the growth of the Spanish nation, political changes were inevitable. In 1988, the United States and Spain signed an agreement, to remove all U.S. military troops from the peninsula.

"I think the base shutting down was inevitable," said Marquis. "If we could have looked forward years ago and seen all the bases located near major capital's, I think we would have realized that they would close.

"I think it's hard to maintain a foreign military presence in any capital city in any nation," he continued. "I don't think we would like to have foreign troops stationed around Washington, D.C. Our presence is needed in some areas, and for good reason, but I think bases near capital cities will disappear."

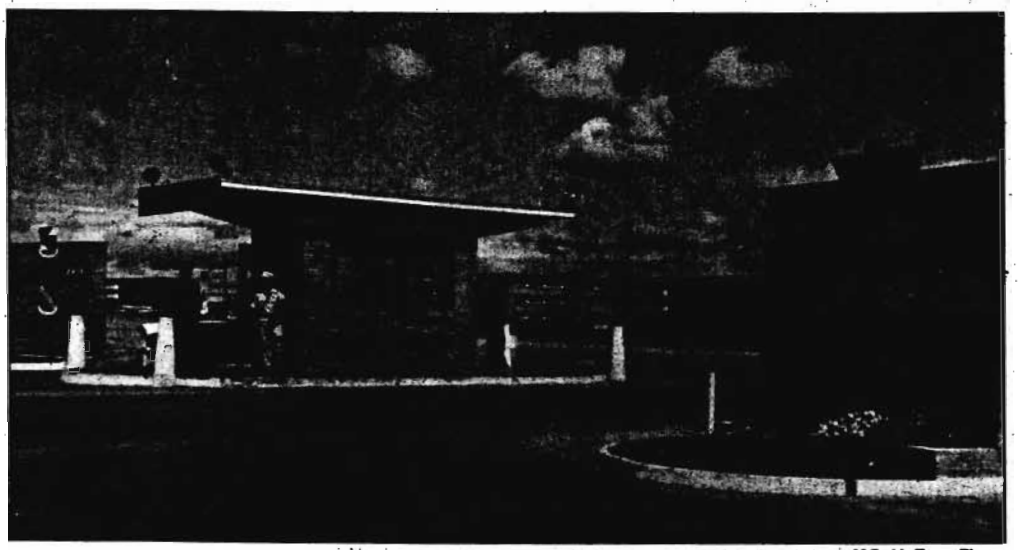
Although U.S. military members won't be seen at all on Torrejon in a few years, the memories will remain, and so will some retirees.

Yanchuck said he would live out his days here, as did Lindsey.

"My life is here now," said Yanchuck. "I'm not saying I like Spain better than the states, but this is where I plan to stay. I have three kids here, and they're kind of set in their ways.

"I'll miss the base -- doggone right I'll miss it," he continued. "I'll miss talking to all the people, the exchange, the commissary -- I've been shopping at commissaries since I came in the Air Force in 1946.

"I'd be lying if I said I'm not going to miss the base or the Air Force. But, I'll adapt. I adapted when I came here in 1956, and I can do it again."



U.S. Air Force Photo

A look back: The Torrejon AB main gate as it looked during the Strategic Air Command era of the 1950s.

IN THE MED

Base bolsters NATO's southern flank

America's answer to the post-World War II expansion of communism was to increase its military presence in the fledging countries of war-torn Western Europe.

Several European nations asked for American military and economic aid, in return allowing American bases on their soil. That was good for American interests and helped ensure the safety of America's allies during the post-war reconstruction period.

As the Cold War heated up in the early 1950s, U.S. strategic planners realized Spain's importance in the defense of the entrance to the Mediterranean, Southern Europe and North Africa. And though President Harry Truman's government didn't see eye-to-eye with Spain's Francisco Franco regime, they felt it was better to deal with Spain than leave it open to Soviet influence.

So, in March 1952, the U.S. began negotiations with Spain to open military bases in their country. They reached an agreement in September 1953. The U.S. could construct and operate Air Force and Navy bases in Spain in return for economic and military aid.

Since Spain wanted recognition as a contributor to western defense, Spanish leaders themselves chose Torrejon for the main U.S. base. Because of this, such issues as Barajas International Airport air traffic control conflicts and Madrid as a likely Soviet nuclear target were set aside. The base would be next to the Spanish air force test and development center in Torrejon de Ardoz.

Construction of the base began almost immediately after the agreement. Spanish labor and materials were used, helping the Spanish economy. The flightline was finished in late September 1956, but construction of other facilities delayed the activation of the base. While construction continued, 16th Air Force accepted control of the base Dec. 15, 1956. It was designated to oversee Strategic Air Command operations in Spain and Morocco. Final construction costs ran about $66.7 million in 1956 dollars.

Finally, Torrejon was activated June 1, 1957. A month later, 16th AF and all U.S. facilities in Spain were reassigned to SAC. A rotation of B-47s began alert duties at the base July 1, 1958.

The 3970th Air Base (later Combat Support) Group took over maintenance of U.S. facilities and provided base operations support. The group continued this mission for several years, since the base didn't have an operational unit assigned.

This changed Jan. 6, 1964, when the first operational unit, the 3970th Strategic Wing took control of the base. It also supported the 65th Air Division, responsible for Spanish air defense with the Spanish air force, through 1965.

In the early 1960s, Tactical Air Command began supporting strike commitments at forward operating bases on NATO's Southern Region by rotating stateside fighter squadrons to bases in Italy and Turkey. But by 1966, because of its Vietnam War obligation, it could no longer support the deployments. Therefore, Air Force reassigned one TAC fighter wing to Torrejon to continue the duty.

That's when, in April 1966, the 401st Fighter Wing transferred to Torrejon from England AFB, La., to take operational control of U.S. forces. Simultaneously, 16th AF and the base were reassigned to U.S. Air Forces in Europe. The wing remained the only Air Force fighter wing in the Mediterranean region for 26 years.

And because France closed U.S. bases, Torrejon also became the Mediterranean's Southern Region main airlift access point.

Then, in 1988, the United States and Spain signed the Agreement on Defense Cooperation, which stated the wing (which became the 401st Fighter Wing in 1991) would depart the base by May 4, 1992.

But the American presence will not entirely go away. An airlift support mission remains.

THE STORM

Luck had nothing to do with it

by TSgt. Louis A. Arana-Barradas
401st FW Public Affairs Office

Luck had nothing to do with the 614th Fighter Squadron's shining performance and list of achievements during the Gulf War.

Because, from the moment the Lucky Devils touched down at Doha, Qatar, they were ready for their wartime mission.

As the first-ever United States military force to operate out of the tiny Persian Gulf country, the unit arrived at a bare desert base. Within 48 hours, however, they were flying.

"We started with a hangar and a ramp and built a complete fighter operation," then squadron commander Lt. Col. Bruce A. Wright said. Tents to house the support troops were set up on a barren, sandy lot, less than 100 yards from the flightline.

While tent city was going up, pilots were flying air-to-ground and dissimilar air combat training missions with their Qatari Emiri Air Force comrades. The Qataris flew the F-1 Mirage, just like Iraq's air force. They also flew against Qatari missile defense like those used by the Iraqis.

"That was great training, probably the best 'go-to-war' training we could have had anywhere in the world," Wright said.

When not flying, squadron members trained their hosts. "You have left a lasting impression on the officers and airmen of the QEAF," Qatari Col. Ahmed Abdullah Sultan Al-Kuwari said.

Lucky Devil pilots, trained in air-to-ground tactics, also practiced close air support and air-to-air strategy. "We started flying close air support sorties to support the Army ... the same units we supported during the war," Wright said. "And we had the best air-to-air training in the theater because we flew against the Qatari F-1s, just like the Iraqis fly."

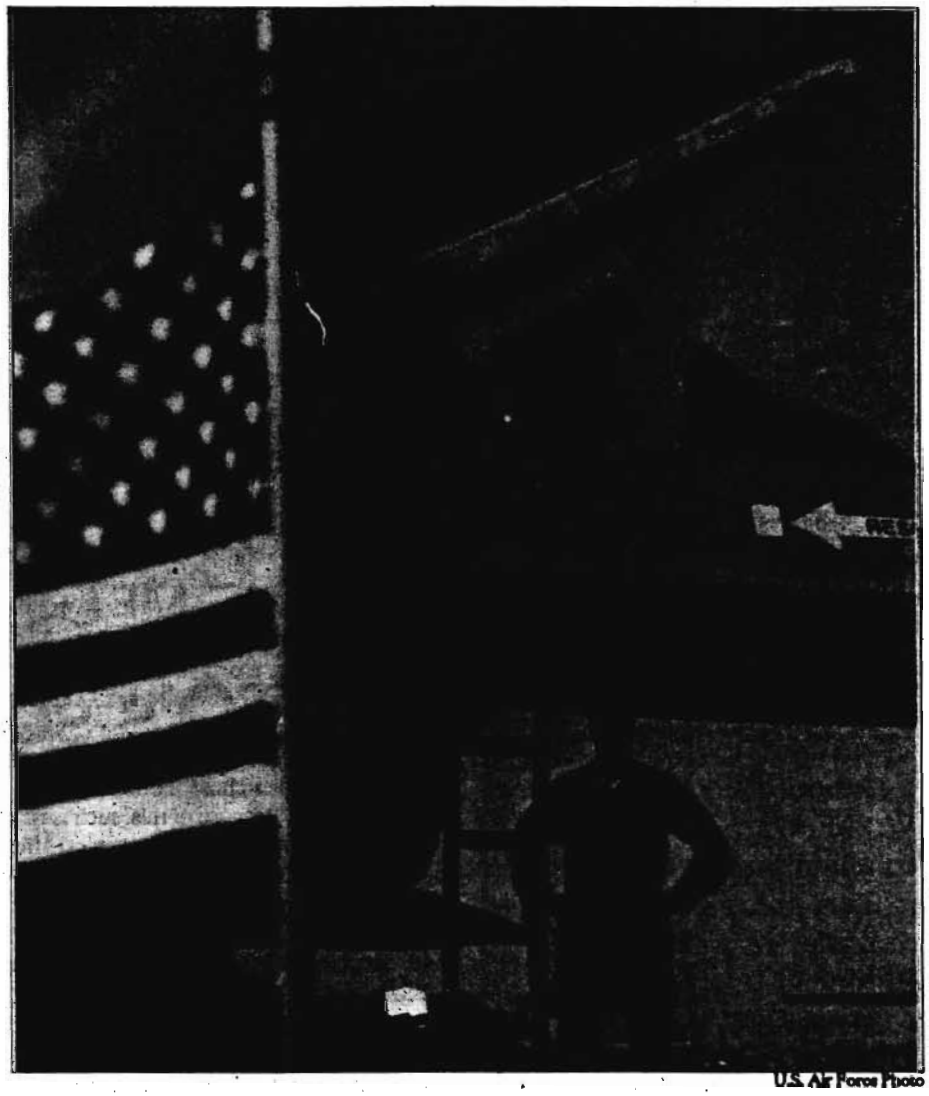
Then came Desert Storm.

Fully-loaded "for bear," squadron jets thundered into combat Jan. 17, for the first daylight bombing raid over Kuwait. Two days later, they flew the first daylight raid over Baghdad. Facing the most intense anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missile threat since the Vietnam War, Wright said, "We hit targets in downtown Baghdad -- the deepest targets. We hit one of the city's biggest oil refineries. It burned for two weeks."

But Jan. 19 was also a costly day for the squadron. Two of its pilots were shot down over the Iraqi capital. Maj. Jeffrey Tice and Capt. Mike Roberts finished the war as prisoners of war.

Despite unfamiliar and harsh desert conditions, maintainers kept the Falcons flying. By war's end, the unit had amassed 3,318 combat flying hours on 1,303 sorties and dropped more than 3.6 million pounds of bombs. They achieved a low 2 percent abort rate. "And we didn't lose one person ... the credit goes to our maintenance people," Wright said.

Though the unit was inactivated at Torrejon Dec. 30, 1991, its spirit remains. "The Lucky Devils will be ready to meet -- and beat -- the challenge head on," Wright said. "And luck will have nothing to do with it."



U.S. Air Force Photo

Ready for takeoff: A crew chief readies a Lucky Devil pilot for a mission over Iraq.

THE STORM

Screamin' Eagles rain bombs on Iraq

While coalition forces focused their Desert Storm raids in Kuwait and Southern Iraq, the 612th Fighter Squadron took its own war to the enemy in northern Iraq, cutting off escape routes and air defense capabilities.

Squadron pilots, maintainers and support people deployed to Incirlik AB, Turkey, Sept. 17, 1990, to fly in Display Determination, an annual NATO exercise.

The following month, their plans were altered. They became part of Joint Task Force Proven Force, flying with F-15, F-4 and F-111 and tanker units in the first Air Force composite wing, the 7440th Composite Wing (Provisional).

During the weeks before Operation Desert Storm, more people and equipment began to pour into Incirlik. But, although exercising, members of the 612th didn't know until Jan. 15 whether or not they would be part of the war.

Until then, according to Lt. Col. Ted Carter, then the 612th FS commander, Turkish and American government leaders were working through diplomatic channels to use Incirlik should there be war.

"We sat on pins and needles trying to get a feel for when it would kick off, and if it did, whether and how we would be involved," Carter said.

The squadron, much to the surprise of Saddam Hussein's armies in the north, did get involved.

And when they did, it seemed there was no stopping them.

The air power of the 612th's F-16s, combined with other aircraft assigned to the provisional wing, attacked and destroyed more than 80 targets in northern Iraq.

Screamin' Eagle pilots raided air fields, mobile Scud sites and other important military targets, with the objective of taking out Iraq's northern air defense network and "denying them their eyes," Carter said.

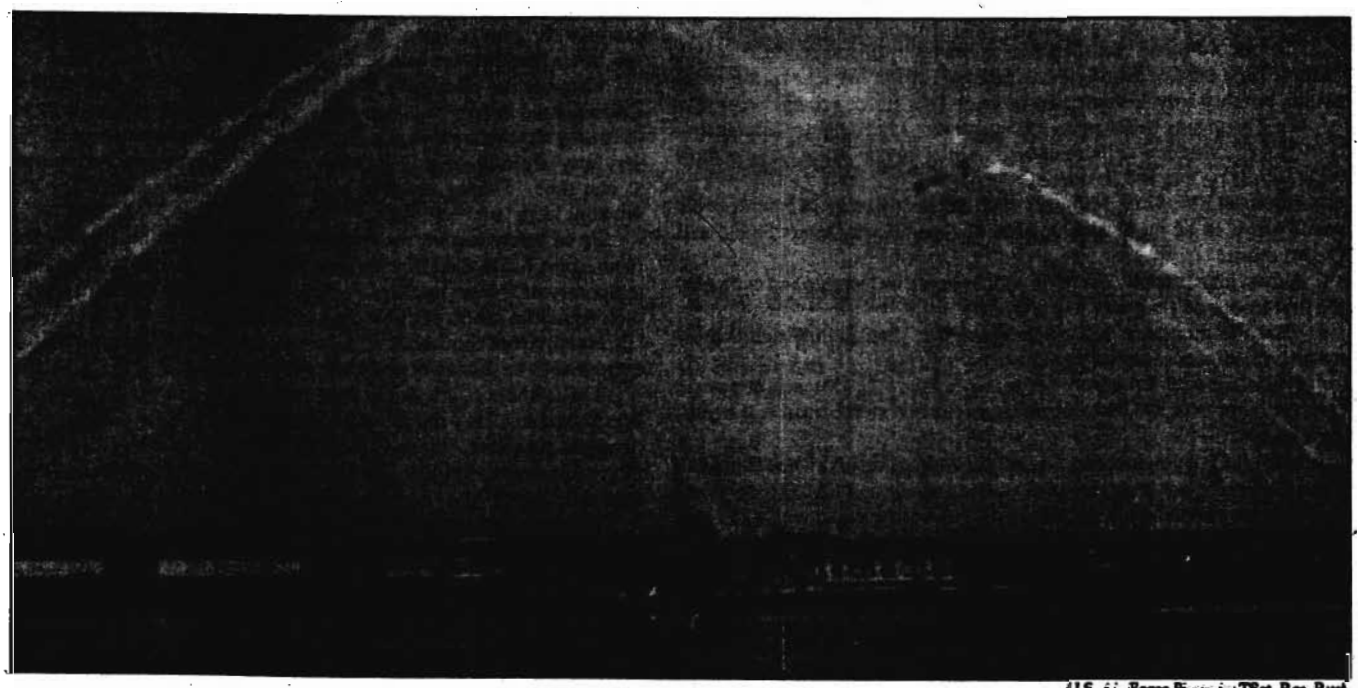
As the war continued, the 612th's mission moved south, including a run to Baghdad in mid-February. These missions were aimed at tank repair and armored vehicle and metal manufacturing facilities, as well as Republican Guard forces.

The squadron's constant pounding of enemy targets "denied the Iraqis the use of their northern air bases and a sanctuary to hide their airplanes," Carter said.

The mere presence of the 612th and other composite force units, seemed to freeze the Iraqi army aligned on Turkey's western border with Iraq.

Flying more than 1,000 combat bombing sorties during the 39-day air war, the squadron had the lowest abort rate ever seen in war -- 1.3 percent. They dropped more than 3.9 million pounds of bombs, destroying everything from airfields to ammunition bunkers and oil refineries to research facilities.

Much to the surprise of Hussein, the 612th and other units of Proven Force proved to be a force to reckon with.



U.S. Air Force Photo by TSgt. Ron Rusk

Coming Home: A Screamin' Eagle F-16 returns home from its wartime duty at Incirlik AB, Turkey

THE STORM

Those remaining hold down the fort

by Sgt. Debbie Aragon
401st FW Public Affairs Office

No one knew during that first week of August 1990 what was about to come. First and foremost on most peoples' minds was the 401st Fighter Wing's Unit Effectiveness Inspection set to begin the following week.

"Since this isn't war, let's excel without breaking our people or our planes ... let's show the inspectors what an outstanding fighter unit looks like," Col. (now Brig. Gen.) James I. Mathers, then the wing commander, said.

Little did anyone know what the wing was to do in the following months.

The inspection was terminated in-progress, and the wing began to concentrate its efforts on a real-world crisis -- the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces and the beginning of Operation Desert Shield. The 614th Fighter Squadron and support team quickly mobilized, deployed, and started flying sorties before the end of the month at Doha, Qatar. They were only the second U.S. Air Forces in Europe unit to deploy to the Persian Gulf.

The 612th FS and team left two weeks later, bound for Incirlik AB, Turkey. Their original tasking was to take part in exercise Display Determination, but they soon became part of Joint Task Force Proven Force.

What remained at Torrejon AB wasn't just a third fighter squadron -- the 613th FS, but many units, ready and waiting for deployment or to supply replacement people and resources.

The 401st FW, 625th Military Airlift Support Group and their people would prove to be an invaluable part of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Almost immediately, Torrejon people began welcoming and caring for the first troops on their way to the front.

401st FW members "left manning the fort" contributed significantly towards mission accomplishment like:

• 401st Services Squadron: Served more than 500,000 meals and made beds for more than 345,000 aircrew members before the historical operations ended.

• 401st Civil Engineering Squadron: Turned maintenance Hangar 6 into a huge reception and recreation center complete with hundreds of cots and showers, erected tents, constructed a field kitchen, and built a 250-bed aeromedical staging area.

• 401st Mission Support Squadron: Manned Hangar 6, fondly referred to as "Motel 6," around the clock. They provided the basics and many added comforts including snack bar, mini base exchange and recreational facilities. Their postal facility ensured daily mail movement for transiting troops.

• 401st Communications Squadron: Air traffic control service provided around-the-clock support to aircrews flying more than 1,300 missions a month. To help keep spirits high, squadron members handled more than 200 morale calls between deployed locations and the United States per month. Huge increases in message traffic was distributed, keeping information flowing.

• 401st Supply Squadron: Fuel, fuel, and more fuel. Squadron members pumped more than 225 million gallons of jet fuel during the operations and shipped more than 9,000 line items of equipment.

• 401st Transportation Squadron: Once on the ground, transportation personnel bused more than 450,000 aircrew and duty passengers between the flightline and wherever they were to call 'home' during their stay at Torrejon.

• 401st Fighter Wing Hospital: By blending more than 400 augmentees into its organization, the hospital was able to increase its bed capacity to six times that of peacetime.

• 401st Comptroller Squadron: Travel pay became a way of life for members of this squadron as they processed requests for tens of thousands of local and temporary duty personnel.

• 401st Component Repair Squadron: Members tackled the responsibility of becoming the intermediate level maintenance support center for avionics and jet engine maintenance for the 401st FW and other F-16 units deployed to forward locations.

• 401st Equipment Maintenance Squadron: Thousands of tons of munitions were successfully transferred from Torrejon's munitions storage facility to Moron AB, without incident.

• 401st Security Police Squadron: As well as security for Torrejon, an air base ground defense team was assigned to Moron AB to defend wing assets.

These wing squadrons and support units accomplished all of this and more, while operating with at least 20 percent of their people deployed with the wing's two forward units.

The constant flow of aircraft, people and cargo in and out of Torrejon was due in no small part to the efficiency of the 625th Military Airlift Support Group's aerial port and consolidated aircraft maintenance squadrons, and logistics support from the Forward Supply Location.

During the height of Operations Desert Shield and Storm, an average of 89 C-5 and C-141 transporter aircraft arrived daily in the Middle East. Of those, more than 80 percent transited through Torrejon.

By the end of the operations, the group had processed more than 10,000 airlift missions. That's compared to an average of 1,500 missions in a year. Some of those, the top-priority Desert Express C-141 missions to ferry essential cargo, were turned around within one hour and 15 minutes. That's two hours less then the normal C-141 turn time.

Knowing the mammoth task assigned to them, members of the 625th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron were hard at work before transiting aircraft even touched down on Spanish tarmac. As a result, on a very busy day in January 1991, 79 aircraft were parked on Torrejon's ramp at one time. During another 24-hour period in the same month, 103 missions were launched.

From safely recovering each aircraft to maintaining and launching them again, 625th CAMS members, whether permanently assigned or on temporary duty from another Military Airlift Command unit, carried out their squadron motto of "Can Do Maintenance."

Hundreds of thousands of passengers and more than 160,000 tons of cargo had to be unloaded and loaded from those missions.

That's where 625th Aerial Port Squadron military and civilian members kicked in. They did the processing, loading and unloading for all of those people and resources. That's including, for passengers, making sure they were accounted for and boarded the right aircraft for the right destinations.

To cut aircraft ground time by at least one hour, APS members worked around-the-clock. As soon as they completed loading one aircraft, they were off to the next one, keeping aircraft ramp time as short as possible.

Like a good parking spot near the commissary on pay days, aircraft often had to wait for a place to park.

Without the 625th MASG and 401st FW here, people might wonder just how much "thunder and lightning" there would have been behind Operation Desert Storm.

WING FACTS

Bosses, bases, planes - 401st had many

The 401st Fighter Wing has had a long list of commanders during its 49-year history. From World War II through Desert Storm, 36 men have led the wing. They were:

401st Bombardment Group (Heavy)
Col. Neil B. Harding, circa April 1, 1943
Col. Harold W. Bowman, June 1943
Col. William T. Seawell, December 1944
Col. Harry G. Libbey, June 26, 1947
Lt. Col. James L. Fletcher, circa October 1948
Unknown, June 27, 1949
Lt. Col. William N. Hensley, May 1, 1951
Col. Walter G. Benz, Feb. 8, 1954
Lt. Col. Ralph F. Newman, March 1, 1956
Col. Chester L. Van Etteh, June 2, 1956

401st Tactical Fighter Wing
Col. Chester L. Van Etten, Sept. 25, 1957
Brig. Gen. Ivan W. McElroy, April 1, 1959
Col. Albert W. Schinz, June 10, 1960
Col. Niven K. Cranfill, March 11, 1962
Col. Richard V. Travis, March 15, 1962
Col. William P. McBride, Sept. 22, 1964
Col. Harold G. Shook, June 14, 1965
Col. Clayton M. Isaacson, May 7, 1966
Brig. Gen. Sanford K. Moats, April 20, 1967
Col. Herndon F. Williams, Nov. 2, 1968
Col. James M. Hoag Jr., Jan. 8, 1970
Col. Wilbur L. Creech, Nov. 17, 1970
Col. Tony M. Greget, July 19, 1971
Col. Richard G. Collins, Sept. 6, 1972
Col. Charles L. Donnelly Jr., Nov. 1, 1973
Col. Benjamin R. Battle, July 17, 1975
Col. Anthony T. Sheehan, July 14, 1977
Col. Kenneth W. North, June 12, 1979
Col. Wilfred L. Goodson, May 8, 1981
Brig. Gen. Albert L. Logan, Jan. 25, 1982
Col. John C. Fryer Jr., June 29, 1984
Col. Walter C. Hersman, Oct. 4, 1985
Col. Lawrence P. Farrell Jr., Aug. 17, 1987
Col. Patrick W. O'Brien, Aug. 10, 1988
Col. James I. Mathers, March 20, 1989

401st Fighter Wing
Col. Jerry L. Nelson, July 16, 1991

During the 401st Fighter Wing's long and distinguished history, its men, women and aircraft have called several places home.

From Ephrata Army AB, Wash., to Torrejon AB, Spain, the base and dates the wing has been stationed at were:

401st Bombardment Group (Heavy)
Ephrata AAB, Wash., April 1, 1943
Geiger Field, Wash., July 15, 1943
Great Falls AAB, Mont., July 8, 1943
Deenethorpe, England, Nov. 19, 1943
Sioux Falls AAB, S.D., May 30, 1945
Brooks Field, Texas, June 26, 1947
Biggs Air Force Base, Texas, June 27, 1949
Alexandria (later England) AFB, La., Feb. 8, 1954

401st Tactical Fighter Wing
England AFB, La., Sept. 25, 1957
Torrejon AB, Spain, April 27, 1966

401st Fighter Wing
Torrejon AB, Oct. 1, 1991

From the Flying Fortress to the Fighting Falcon, the aircraft flown by pilots of the 401st Fighter Wing have run the gamut from ancient bombers to state-of-the-art fighters -- from slow to supersonic.

Starting with the B-17G Flying Fortress in World War II, today's wing pilots fly the supersonic F-16C Fighting Falcon -- which they flew into combat during the Gulf War.

Aircraft flown by wing pilots included:

401st Bombardment Group (Heavy)
B-17G Flying Fortress, 1943-1945
AT-6 Texan and AT-11, 1947-1949
B-29 Super Fortress, 1949-1950

401st Tactical Fighter Wing
F-86F Sabre, 1954-1955 and 1956-1957
F-84 Thunderstreak, 1955-1956
F-100D Super Sabre, 1957-1971
F-4C, D and E Phantom II, 1970-1983
F-16A, B, C and D Fighting Falcon, 1983-March 24, 1992

HOLA 600th

Although Falcon flying mission gone, Air Force presence remains in Spain

by SrA. Bob Crenshaw
401st FW Public Affairs Office

As the 401st Fighter Wing closes another chapter in Torrejon AB's colorful history, another volume is about to open.

The 600th Air Base Group will be activated Monday as the wing departs Torrejon. The air base group will provide mission support for the 625th Military Airlift Support Group which remains at Torrejon.

Many people staying on after the wing leaves have wondered what services will be left for them, and what services will leave.

The bottom line is most things won't change, according to Col. John L. Grozier, 401st Combat Support Group commander, and commander of the air base group starting Monday.

"I don't see a big change in services," said Grozier. "But, the daily hum of the base will be different -- we'll only be a footprint of the base as it was. People won't see a big change right away, as many will still be leaving up until around September. However, after January, people should be used to the air base group and supporting the Military Airlift Command mission.

"The commissary, shoppette, child care center, La Cita, they'll all stay," the colonel said. "The rest of the base will be turned over to the Spanish. The base will look more like a European military installation rather than a U.S. Air Force base because our folks won't be seen as much as they were before. Our people will be nestled in Bldg. 206 and the MAC folks will still work their operation down on the flightline."

Although a lot of the services are not going to change much, the size of the base will continue to drawdown until January 1993. At that time the number of people should be down to 350-400; compared to about 1,800 presently.

The base will be significantly smaller. From more than 4,000 people last year, by December the base population will total from 250 to 400 people, and according to the colonel, small bases have both advantages and disadvantages.

"We'll be a close-knit group," said Grozier. "The group will be so small and in one area that we'll all know how to do everybody else's job, more or less. We'll all know how to get into family services and how to sign out items for people coming in. We'll know how to contact people in an emergency even if the Red Cross worker is not in."

> **"The daily hum of the base will be different -- it'll only be a footprint of the base as it was. However, after January, people should be used to the air base group and supporting the military airlift command mission. We'll be a close-knit group."**
>
> **Col. John L. Grozier**

U.S. Air Force Photo

Col. John L. Grozier

To make sure and keep people informed, the group will still provide "current" chains of command (because of so many people leaving from now until January) and continue the action line program.

"We'll still have a base newspaper (a new, four-pager), and the action line will still be active; however, I don't think there'll be as many questions since the base is so small, word will get around very quickly," he said.

Editor's note: ***This is the last edition of the Raider, as the newspaper, in name, leaves with the wing. Beginning May 8, another will be published by the 600th ABG Public Affairs Office. For more information, contact the public affairs office at Exts. 5050 or 5051.***