



Above: A 114th FS F-15C pilot raises the airbrake as his Eagle lands at Klamath Falls after a training sortie. A number of the squadron's aircraft carry nose art, this aircraft being 'Mad Dawg'.

Right: This aircraft carries an ACMI pod on its starboard outer pylon. These pods record aircraft telemetry so that instructors and students can replay training flights for an accurate post-mission debrief.



Another unique function was added to the curriculum of the 114th FS in January 1990 when a new medical training programme known as Top Knife was created. At that time it was the F-16 Flight Surgeon Training Course and the first of its kind in the nation. Today this course provides post-graduate training in the unique aeromedical aspects of fighter aviation to qualified flight surgeons, and combines fighter-specific medical academics and aerospace flight surgeon training in the F-15. Current participants receive 42.6 hours instruction in aerospace academics, medical academics, device and specialised training over 10 days, including a minimum of one dedicated sortie. At the conclusion of this course the successful graduate will have a thorough comprehension of the medical and physiological aspects of flying high-performance fighter aircraft in the air-to-air combat environment.

Another dedicated programme, called Top Eye, was established for optometrists in January 1994, and today this course provides postgraduate training in the unique aeromedical aspects of fighter aviation to qualified optometrists and ophthalmologists. It combines fighter-specific medical academics and aerospace optometry training in the F-15. The length of the course is seven days and includes a minimum of one sortie in the back seat of an F-15.

During the build-up of the 114th FS schoolhouse, the ANG's Air Defense Alert mission continued as a separately-based detachment while the squadron transitioned to the F-16. The alert detachment became permanent and was first flown by F-4 Phantoms from Portland, to be later replaced by F-16s from Fargo, North Dakota. The full-time alert mission handled by the 119th FW was deactivated and the alert detachment was relocated to March AFB, California, in July 1994.

The official designation of the current wing came on 27 June 1996, when the 114th Fighter Squadron was assigned to the newly established 173rd Fighter Wing. As the 173rd FW had no previous history as a unit designation, the 173rd was the newest wing in the USAF. In 1998 F-15 aircraft replaced the school's F-16s.

F-15 schoolhouse

Commanded by Colonel Thomas R. Schiess, the 173rd is an Air Education & Training Command (AETC)-gained Air National Guard unit and is one of only two F-15 schoolhouses in the USA where students are taught the basics of how to fly and employ the F-15 Eagle, using all the weapons and capabilities it has. The other F-15 Eagle schoolhouse is located at Tyndall AFB, Florida, where training is undertaken by the active duty 325th Fighter Wing. Both units use the same syllabus.

Those pilots who have graduated from the Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals (IFF) course and have received a fighter assignment based on their Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (SUPIT) results, or are T-37/T-38 instructor pilots selected for a fighter assignment, will undergo type conversion with their Formal Training Unit (FTU).

A fighter assignment means that these pilots have yielded the highest grades and have the mental ability to fly one of the most potent operational air defence fighters in the world, the Boeing F-15 Eagle.

As the squadron's Director of Operations (DO) Lieutenant Colonel Rick Wedan explains: "Officer training usually takes three months, after which the students attend some form of flight screening to see whether the candidate has the aptitude to fly an aircraft. Those selected for undergraduate pilot training, will start to fly the T-37 or T-6 for the duration of six months in which the class is going to be divided into those who have the ability to fly fast jets, while the others are selected to fly slower aircraft or aircraft that require a crew."

"Those selected to fly fast jets continue their course in the so-called fighter track flying the T-38 Talon for six months. At the end of this course the students earn their wings. This T-38 class is then ranked against their peers, and the top graduates have the first choice of what jet they want to fly, and normally they select the F-15. However, before coming to Kingsley Field, they have to finish one more course, which is Introduction to

Fighter Fundamentals where the students have to make the conversion from flying a jet to fighting with it, learning the basics of dogfighting, dropping bombs, etc. This course lasts some six weeks in which they fly approximately 18 missions. We are very fortunate as these students are motivated, intelligent and skilled.

"Those attending the F-15 Initial Qualification Course are the cream of the crop as they were first selected among their peers to get into the air force. They were then selected among their peers to get to officers school. They then stood out to go to pilot training, and then to excel and go to the fighter track. They are the best in class as they simply made it this far."

F-15 B-course

These students thus enrol into the Basic Course (so-called B-course), otherwise known as the USAF F-15 Initial Qualification Course. Furthermore, the USAF F-15 Transition/Re-qualification Course with six different tracks (Tracks 1A-3B) is available to train pilots with prior front-seat hours in tactical (air-to-air radar equipped) fighter/attack aircraft, front/left-seat hours in tactical (non air-to-air radar equipped) fighter/attack aircraft, and experienced but non-current F-15 pilots. Finally, for the USAF F-15 Senior Officer/Test Pilot Training Course five special tracks (Tracks 4A-4E) have been established (active-duty or ANG personnel). The latter two courses are shorter in duration and in content.

The B-course and Tracks 1, 2, and 3 objectives are to graduate a fighter pilot that is Basic Aircraft Qualified (BAQ) in F-15 conversion and air-to-air mission tasks. BAQ is defined as the status of an aircrew member who has satisfactorily completed training prescribed to maintain the skills necessary to fly the F-15 aircraft, but who does not maintain Basic Mission Capable (BMC) or Combat Mission Ready (CMR) status.

To obtain full BMC status, graduates typically receive Mission Qualification Training (MQT) at the gaining operational unit prior to BMC certification by the unit commander. Upon completion of the initial qualification course, graduates will be