



HAPPY HOOLIGANS: FLYING THROUGH HISTORY

*An abbreviated history of the North Dakota Air National Guard
and its flying missions.*

Jan. 16, 1947: The North Dakota Air National Guard was officially established at Hector Airport, Fargo, N.D.

February 1947-1954: The North Dakota Air National Guard flew the **P-51D Mustang**, its first fighter aircraft.

January 1953: The unit's name changed from 178th Fighter-Bomber Squadron to the 178th Fighter Interceptor Squadron as it was given an air defense mission.

September 1953: The runway alert program began with two P-51s on alert 14 hours a day in Fargo. The Happy Hooligans remained on home station alert every day until the mission ended in **March 1990**.

1954: The North Dakota Air National Guard was assigned to the Air Defense Command and entered the jet age when the unit converted to the **F-94 Starfire**, which it flew until **1958**.

1958-1966: The **F-89 Scorpion** became the new major flying mission for the North Dakota Air National Guard.

1966-1969: The **F-102 Delta Dagger** replaced the Scorpion as the Wing's main fighter jet.

1969-1977: The **F-101 Voodoo** era followed the Dagger.

1970: For the first time ever, the North Dakota Air National Guard won the entire William Tell Meet, a worldwide fighter competition, resulting in being named the best fighter unit in the world. The Hooligans would go on to win the title twice more, in **1972** and **1994**. The unit won the F-4 division in **1986**, as well, and took third with the F-4 in **1974** and fifth in **1996**.

1974: The North Dakota Air National Guard won the first of two Hughes Achievement Awards. The trophy, inaugurated in 1953 by Hughes Aircraft Company, is presented annually for

superior performance among U.S. Air Force squadrons that are the best in air defense fighter achievement. The winner is determined based on missile qualifications, successful missions flown, aircraft operational readiness rates and flight safety. The Happy Hooligans are the only F-16 unit to win the award, and the first Air National Guard unit to ever earn the Hughes Trophy and, when it won it again in **1994**, it became the only Air National Guard unit to ever take it home twice.

In 1974, the unit also became the first Reserve Component force to take home the U.S. Air Force Daedalian Maintenance Trophy. No other unit had ever won both prestigious, national awards in the same year.

1977-1990: The **F-4 Phantom** took the North Dakota Air National Guard through the 1980s.

1983: The first North Dakota Air National Guard overseas mission took place with six F-4s and 120 support personnel deployed to Keflavik, Iceland. Eight Russian TU-95 Bear bombers were intercepted by Hooligan pilots during the deployment.

1990: The last fighter jet the Happy Hooligans would pilot, the **F-16 Fighting Falcon**, took to the skies, a mission that continued until **2007**.

1994: The Happy Hooligans won the William W. Spruance Safety Award, designating it the Air National Guard unit that made the most significant contributions toward accident prevention.

The North Dakota Air National Guard also received its second Winston P. Wilson Trophy, recognizing it as the most outstanding Air National Guard unit with jet fighters or reconnaissance aircraft.

Over the years, the Happy Hooligans received more than two dozen other flying safety awards of different calibers.

Sept. 11, 2001: The North Dakota Air National Guard responded with F-16s from its alert site at Langley Air Force Base, Va., to provide the first battle-damage assessment of Pentagon after the terrorist attacks.

May 2003: Pratt & Whitney awards the 119th Maintenance Group for a never-before-seen 60,000 hours operating an F100 (F-16 engine) without an in-flight engine failure.

2005: BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure Commission) discussions ended.

October 2006: The North Dakota Air National Guard's alert mission ended at Langley Air Force Base, Va. (Other alert sites over the years included March Air Reserve Base, Calif., and Kingsley Field, Ore.)

January 2007: The North Dakota Air National Guard officially retired the F-16 as the fighter mission ended after 60 successful years flying and maintaining fighter jets. Since 1973, the 119th Fighter Wing flew more than 145,000 hours in aircraft without a Class A mishap, a feat unprecedented by any other U.S. fighter unit.

2007: The **C-21 Learjet** mission began, with the first plane landing in Fargo on Jan. 9. The mission was intended to serve as a “bridge” until the C-27J Spartan aircraft was scheduled to arrive in the 2012-13 timeframe. The Air Force canceled that mission in **March 2013**.

May-August 2009: N.D. and Connecticut Air National Guard members deployed to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar with C-21s to provide support for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Despite the heat and dust, maintainers ensured that no take-offs were missed as the aircraft traveled to and from areas including Afghanistan, Iraq, Djibouti and elsewhere.

2009: The Happy Hooligans’ 177th Airlift Squadron received the Joint Operational Support Airlift Center Squadron of the Year award, recognizing it as the best small aircraft unit in JOSAC, the airlift branch of the U.S. Transportation Command.

October 2010: A C-27J Spartan familiarization tour took place in Fargo as Airmen moved a step closer in the anticipated next flying mission.

2012: The North Dakota Air National Guard earned its 15th U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, which recognizes units across the active-duty Air Force, Reserves and Air National Guard for achievements of national or international significance. The Wing previously received the award in **1973, 1974, 1979, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008** and **2010**.

Aug. 27, 2013: The last C-21 Learjet (now Bombardier Aerospace) leaves the North Dakota Air National Guard base in Fargo, marking the end of 66 years of successful, piloted missions.

With the departure of the C-21, the North Dakota Air National Guard reached more than 175,340 flying hours without a Class A mishap.

Aug. 28, 2013: The last C-21 to be flown by the North Dakota Air National Guard, which is also the oldest C-21 in existence that was built for the Air Force, is accepted into the National Museum of the Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, during a 10 a.m. ceremony.

Oct. 1, 2013: As the new fiscal year begins, the Happy Hooligans will officially begin a new Intelligence Group mission in addition to continuing the MQ-1 Predator mission and 219th Security Forces mission at the Minot Air Force Base.