

175TH WING

21ST CENTURY GUARD ARMEN

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History of the Maryland Air National Guard

Published April 03, 2013

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The Maryland Air National Guard traces its origins to June 29, 1921, when the 104th Observation Squadron received federal recognition. The 104th was the first post-war National Guard flying unit to be equipped with its own aircraft, 13 Curtiss JN-4 Jennies.

The unit operated out of Baltimore's Logan Field and initially served as division aviation for the 29th Infantry Division. In addition to Jennies, the 104th flew a variety of other aircraft during the interwar period, almost all of them two-seat biplanes.

The 104th's World War II service began on Feb. 3, 1941, when it was mobilized along with the rest of the Maryland Guard. During the war, the 104th flew antisubmarine patrols out of Atlantic City, N.J., as part of the 59th Observation Group using O-46 and O-47 aircraft.

In late 1942, the 104th was inactivated and its personnel transferred to the new 517th Bombardment Squadron, which soon moved to Langley Field, Va. There the unit, which was later redesignated the 12th Antisubmarine Squadron, flew B-18B Bolo, and later B-24 Liberator and B-25 Mitchell bombers against German U-boats in the Atlantic.

The unit was moved to California and redesignated the 859th Bombardment Squadron in September 1943. By this time most of the original National Guard members had been transferred elsewhere as individual replacements, although a handful were still serving with the unit when it entered combat in Europe in May 1944.

The 104th returned to Maryland when the 104th Fighter Squadron was reactivated in 1946 at Harbor Field in Baltimore, equipped with P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft, later replaced by F-51 Mustangs. From 1955 to 1958, the unit was organized as a fighter-interceptor squadron and charged with defending the Baltimore-Washington area against possible Soviet bomber attack. The unit soon converted to the F-86 Sabrejet, and in 1957 relocated to the Glenn L. Martin Company Airport, whose longer runway was necessary to support jet operations.

Maryland gained a second flying unit - and its first group-level headquarters - in 1955, when the 135th Air Resupply Group was organized at Harbor Field. The 135th was one of only a handful of Air Force special operations units in existence at the time. Equipped with Curtiss C-46 Commando transports and SA-16 Albatross seaplanes, its mission was the covert infiltration, resupply, and extraction of special forces. Following the closure of Harbor Field in 1960, the unit also relocated to the Martin Company Airport.

A second group headquarters was added in 1962, when the 175th Tactical Fighter Group was established that October. The 104th Tactical Fighter Squadron, which had heretofore operated as an independent squadron, became part of the new group.

The Spring of 1968 brought considerable activity, with both the 135th and 175th being called out to help quell rioting in Baltimore following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and elements of the 175th being federalized and deployed to Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., in response to the Pueblo Crisis in Korea. While mobilized, the unit trained Air Force pilots to serve as forward air controllers. The 175th returned home and demobilized that December.

The 135th endured multiple changes in designation, mission and aircraft during the 1970s, switching first from special operations to a tactical air support role, where it flew forward air control missions aboard O-2A Super Skymasters. Then in 1977, the unit converted to a tactical airlift mission, flying the C-7A Caribou. In 1980, the unit converted to the C-130 Hercules aircraft, which it has flown ever since.

The 175th, which had flown the A-37 Dragonfly since turning in its F-86s in 1970, received brand new A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft from the factory in Hagerstown, Md., beginning in 1979. The unit continues to fly the famed tank killer to this day.

The military facilities at Martin State Airport were formally renamed in honor of Maj. Gen. Edwin Warfield III, former adjutant general of Maryland, in 1982, and the base has since been known as Warfield Air National Guard Base. The civilian portion of the field had been purchased by the state and renamed Martin State Airport in 1975.

Despite the end of the Cold War, the Maryland Air National Guard remained active in operations around the world through the remainder of the century. During the build-up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, a number of unit personnel were mobilized to fill support roles. The same year, the 175th won Gunsmoke, the U.S. Air Force Worldwide Gunnery Competition, earning recognition as the best fighter unit in the Air Force.

The 135th participated in humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia, peacekeeping and humanitarian relief in Bosnia, the U.S. intervention in Haiti and the enforcement of U.N. sanctions against Iraq during the 1990s. A-10s from the 175th were likewise kept busy patrolling the skies over Bosnia and enforcing the "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq, where it was called upon to fly retaliatory strikes against Iraqi targets.

On June 15, 1996, the units of the 135th and 175th merged to form the 175th Wing. The 175th Wing, which carries on the

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