

110th WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

110th Fighter Group (Air Defense) activated, 15 Apr 1956
110th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, Oct 1962
Federal recognition of 110th TRG 15 Oct 1962
Redesignated 110th Tactical Air Support Group, 1 Jul 1971
Redesignated 110th Fighter Group, 15 Mar 1992
Redesignated 110th Fighter Wing
Redesignated 110th Airlift Wing

STATIONS

Battle Creek, MI

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

A-10

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

LTC Robert Flagg

Maj Percy Lewis

Col Howard C. Strand, 1974

Col Leroy R. Crane, 1981

Col Ronald L. Seely, 1984

Col Rodger F. Seidel, Dec 2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM





Paly of ten, Gules and Argent; on a chief Azure, nine mullets four, three and two Or; an eagle displayed Proper, charged at the breast with a plate bearing a mullet of the third and grasping in dexter talons two lightning flashes saltirewise in bend and in sinister talons a sword bendwise sinister of the like, hilt Gules; all within a diminished bordure Or. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "110TH AIRLIFT WING" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The paly shield and chief with stars allude to the national flag and represents the unit's commitment to national defense. The eagle taken from the Michigan state flag denotes the unit's dedication to the defense of the state. The star on the disc represents the unit and honors its achievements. The disc reflects Lake Michigan and many other bodies of water in the state and points out the unit's location. The eagle grasps lightning flashes and a sword, symbolizing the unit's rapid response to the mission of defense.



MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

In October 1952, the 172nd Fighter Squadron and its three supporting units were released from active duty, designated the 172nd Fighter Bomber Squadron and received F-86s.

Another major change in the Michigan Air National Guard took place in October of 1962. 110th Tactical Reconnaissance Group came into being. The unit's new mission was day and night photo reconnaissance to include bomb damage assessment and to provide information of disposition, movement and activity of enemy or hostile forces.

After 13 years of the tactical and photographic reconnaissance mission in the RB-57 aircraft, the 110th Tac Recon Group at Battle Creek was redesignated the 110th Tactical Air Support Group on July 1, 1971. A brand new mission required a forward air controller type aircraft and the O-2A was assigned. The mission of the 110th Tactical Air Support Group is to provide close air support through forward air control in air action against hostile targets in close proximity to friendly forces. It requires detailed integration of each mission with the fire power of tactical aircraft and movement of ground forces requiring air support.

Michigan Air Guard's 110th Tactical Reconnaissance Group was activated at Battle Creek by President Lyndon B. Johnson to help deal with massive rioting, looting, and arson in Detroit. The unit's Air Police contingent was flown to the city for duty, its RB-57s flew 35 sorties over damaged parts of the city producing over 9,000 photos, and other unit members took over 400 ground photos. By July 30th, all unit personnel but the Air Police had been demobilized. The latter remained on duty in Detroit until released from service on July 2nd.

The 110th Fighter Wing (FW) of the Michigan Air National Guard was established in 1947 at W.K. Kellogg Airport. The wing operated the A-10 Thunderbolt II in the close air support mission for nearly 20 years, starting in 1991. The 110th FW made numerous combat deployments during this timeframe, including mission supporting Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, as well as Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom in Southwest Asia. The wing served in this capacity until the implementation of the 2005 Base Re-Alignment And Closures decision, which stipulated the unit's transition to the airlift mission.

The newly designated 110th Airlift Wing currently flies the C-21 VIP transport as an interim aircraft, until the C-27 Spartan tactical airlifter becomes available. The wing is also now the home to the 110th Air Operations Group (AOG), which is a component of the 17th Air Force in support of Africa Command. The 110th AOG, which is based at the Joint Forces Headquarters at Battle Creek ANGB, devises strategies and plans air operations in the African region. With these new capabilities, the 110th Airlift Wing remains a viable asset within the U.S. military's warfighting force.

110TM FIGHTER WING

March 1997—The 110th Fighter Wing (FW) deployed to Aviano, AB, Italy as a part of Operation Deliberate Guard. This was an all-ANG contingency mission that supported peacekeeping

operations in Bosnia. Six 110th FW A-10s were sent to Aviano, along with 342 guardsmen who were deployed in three two-week rotations. 110th performed well, as evident by the comment made by the NATO general in charge of the Combat Air Operations Center in Vincenza, Italy, who remarked that the 110th was the greatest unit he'd ever seen.

August 1997—Col. Ron Moore, commander of the 110th FW stepped down from his duty as base commander after 28 years of service in the USAF and ANG. Lt. Col. Ken Heaton took his place.

September 1997—110th FW conducted its first "War Week" exercise in preparation for its Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) in September 1998. This saw the Battle Creek ANGB facilities preparing as they would in a combat theater. War Among the training scenarios performed during the 110*'s War Week included a simulated attack on the base by aircraft and missiles. 4 Week exercises are conducted on a weekend during the months preceding an ORI.

October 1997—Ground was broken for the construction of a new 110th FW Composite Support Facility, which will house the 110th Medical Sq., 110th Services Sq. and a dining facility.

November 1997—The 110th FW deployed 150 personnel to Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Alpena to practice command and control techniques in preparation for the ORI in September 1998.

May 1998—The 110th FW deployed 200 personnel to the Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Alpena for another command and control exercise in preparation for the wing's ORI in September. A Phase One Inspection was also conducted that month.

September 1998—The 110th FW Composite Support Facility, the new building for the 110th Medical Squadron, 110th Services Squadron and dining facility, opened for operations.¹⁰

August 1999—Elements of the 110th FW deployed to Phelps-Collins CRTC in Alpena for six days of training. Among the unit training activities 110th FW guardsmen participated in were flight operations by the 172nd FS and ancillary training.

August 1999—Over 150 members of the 110th FW returned from their combat deployment to Tapani, Italy in support of Operation Allied Force. The deployment lasted seven weeks, during which time A-IOs of the 172nd FS flew bombing missions against the forces of Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosovich. On the first day of combat, the 104th EOG destroyed five tanks and a number of artillery pieces. Combat sorties were flown by the squadron virtually around the clock. The air war lasted until June 20th, by which time the 104th was put on contingency status until they rotated home. In the 442 sorties flown, over 1,000 bombs were dropped, 65 Maverick missiles were launched and 14,000 rounds of 30mm ammunition was expended. The three squadrons that made up the 104th EOG were the first units to employ the Air Expeditionary Force concept. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of Battle Creek guardsmen, AEF deployments are now a major part of the U.S. Air Force's combat doctrine.

January 2000—The 110th FW received its fourth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA) for meritorious service between the years of 1996 and 1998. During that timeframe the unit received an outstanding ORI rating and when the unit was conducting flying operations over Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Guard. The First AFOUA was issued to the 110th in 1971, when the unit was flying the RB-57A tactical reconnaissance aircraft. Its second was awarded in 1985, while the 110th was flying the venerable OA-37 close air support jet. The third award was presented to the unit in 1993 when the unit was called to active duty during the Persian Gulf War.

April 2001—Col. Rodger F. Seidel assumed his role as the new 110th FW commander. Former 110th FW commander was Col. Kencil J. Heaton, who was promoted to Brigadier General and assumed his new duty as Director of Operations as the Michigan Air National Guard Headquarters in Lansing, MI.

Col. Rodger F. Seidel accepts the 110th FW guidon from Maj. Gen. Gordon E. Stump (left), while Stump attaches an Air Force Outstanding Unit Ribbon to the flag (right) during the change of command ceremony.

April 2001—The 110th FW received its fifth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for meritorious service from 1998 through 2000. During this timeframe the 110th FW flew combat missions over Kosovo in support of Operation Allied Force and deployed as a part of AEF 7 to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Southern Watch.

April 2002—The 110th FW deployed to Moody AFB, GA. for Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) training. Dubbed Panhandle Rescue CSAR, the two week exercise was held to prepare HOFW members for upcoming AEF contingency operations. Pilot flew 63 training sorties in conjunction with other CSAR air assets, such as HH-60s, HC-130s and E-8s. A highlight of the employment were the incentive rides in AT-38 supersonic trainers given to 25 110th FW maintenance crews.

December 2002—110th FW personnel deployed to Al Jaber Air Base, Kuwait as a part of the AEF commitment to Operation Southern Watch. The AEF squadron, which included the 110th FW, as well as two other AIG units, completed 200 sorties and 500 hours of flight time during the 30-day deployment.

June 2003—The 110th FW was reorganized into the new Combat Wing Organization. This saw the restructuring of units such as logistics and maintenance squadrons.

May 2005—The Base Realignment And Closures (BRAC) proposal to close Battle Creek ANGB and transfer its aircraft to the 127th Wing at Selfridge ANGB in Mt. Clemens, MI. was announced to the members of the 110th FW. Personnel were understandably distraught by the proposal and many of them would embark on a petition campaign to keep their base open.⁸⁰

Battle Creek would ultimately remain open and assume a new mission supporting C-21 VIP transport aircraft by 2008.

June 2005—Base members and political representatives traveled to St. Louis to convince BRAC commissioners to take Battle Creek ANGB off of the base closures list.

June 2005—Most of the members of the 110th FW deployed to Alpena Combat Readiness Training for week-long Operational Readiness Exercise, in preparation for the inspection in July.

July 2005—BRAC commissioner Sam Skinner and data analyst Ken Small visited Battle Creek ANGB to assess the capabilities and facilities on the base. Skinner was impressed with what he had seen of the 110th FW and promptly proposed an amendment to the original BRAC that would remove Battle Creek ANGB from the base closures list and prepare it for a new mission. The proposal received presidential approval.

October 2005—54 members of the 110th FW, which included firefighters, civil engineers and transportation personnel, deployed to Mississippi and Louisiana to provide emergency assistance to displaced victims in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. 110th firefighters assisted in the search for victims in houses along the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast. 110th members also assisted over 300 displaced evacuees that came to Ft. Custer Michigan for temporary housing. They provided equipment, food and sustenance.

December 2005—The 110th FW received the highly prestigious Outstanding Unit Award with Valor. This honor is only awarded to those units that distinguished themselves in combat and it is rarely presented to Air National Guard units. The award covered the Nov. 2002 to July 2003 time frame, during which time the 110th FW deployed in Southwest Asia in support of Operation Southern Watch and Operation Iraqi Freedom two months later. The 110th FW was the first A-10 unit deployed during the Iraq War and it destroyed 1,100 enemy targets in over 700 sorties.

June 2006—Governor Jennifer Granholm and Lt. Gen. Steve Blum visited Battle Creek ANGB to discuss the possibility of the base to operate Joint Cargo Aircraft (which would later be the C-27 Spartan). This was following the BRAC decision that would transfer the 110th FW's A-10s to the 127th WG at Selfridge. The JCA would bring a new flying mission to Battle Creek. In addition, the base was also slated to become the Joint Warfighting Headquarters (a component of the 17th Air Force). This is a command and control mission that provides direct support to the combat commander. In addition, another proposal was to make Battle Creek a joint reserve base, which would host components from other branches of the service.

March 2007—110th FW pilots and maintenance personnel deployed to Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ for conversion training on the new A-10C. During the two week deployment, the 110th flew 160 sorties and logged 285 flight hours.

May 2007—The 110th FW hosted a weapons of mass destruction response exercise at Battle Creek ANGB. Participants included members from the DoD and local, county, state and federal emergency response personnel. Response to a hypothetical scenario involving high-yield explosives and chemical weapons was rehearsed by personnel. The exercise, which was organized by L-3 Communications, was intended to promote interoperability and readiness between civilian and military agencies."

June 2007—61 members of the 110th FW deployed to Barksdale AFB, LA to participate in the Air Warrior II training exercise. As a part of Operation Jump Start, 93 members of the 110th FW deployed to Arizona and New Mexico to secure the United States' southern border.

November 2007—110th FW departed Battle Creek with 15 A-IOCs and 207 personnel for the Aerospace Expeditionary Force 9/10 deployment to Iraq. , upon arrival to the Central Command area of Responsibility, most of the unit was reassigned to Bagram AB, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.¹⁰⁸ This was done as a result of the grounding of the entire F-15 Eagle fleet, following the crash of a Missouri ANG F-15C. The A-IOs replaced the F-15Es originally slated for deployment to Afghanistan. The 438th Air Expeditionary Group, a "rainbow team" that consisted of the 172nd FS from Battle Creek and the 104th FS from the Maryland ANG, was the first to employ the A-10C in combat. A-IOCs of the 438th AEG provided close air support for troops on the ground. This was the 172nd Fighter Squadron's final A-10 combat deployment, which ended in late January 2008.

December 2009—The 110th Fighter Wing was re-designated as the 110th Airlift Wing (AW) to reflect the change in mission.

June 2010—110th AW hosted the Vigilant Guard emergency response training exercise at Battle Creek ANGB. The exercise combined National Guard with civilian emergency agencies to train for real world emergency scenarios. Such scenarios included a tornado disaster, bio terrorism and a hazardous chemical spill.

The 110 Fighter Wing, Michigan Air National Guard, based in Battle Creek, MI launched 6 of their A-10s on the first leg of their mission to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Southern Watch, The Battle Creek Guard personnel and equipment are part of the Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF). Along with personnel and equipment from the 104 Fighter Wing at Barnes ANG Base, Massachusetts, and the 124 Fighter Wing at Boise ANG Base, Idaho, the three units had worked together in Trapani, Italy for Operation Allied Force during the Kosovo Crisis last year. The "Killer Bees" as the three units are collectively called, all fly the A/OA-10.

The three Air National Guard units will each take a 30-day period of responsibility for the AEF from now into early September. As their part of the AEF, the 110th Fighter Wing will be deploying personnel to a variety of locations throughout Southwest Asia and Europe. The predominant task will be enforcing the "No-Fly Zone" in Operation Southern Watch for a 30-day period. The 124 Fighter Wing is assuming the first 30 days, followed by the 104 Fighter Wing in early July, ending with the 110 Fighter Wing in early August. These deployments will entail sending several hundred members to Southwest Asia to fly and support the A/OA-10 aircraft

There will also be a number of support personnel, the Expeditionary Combat Support Element, deploying to other overseas bases in support of a variety of missions associated with the AEF.

In preparation for the deployments, the three units have been meeting with their active duty Air Force counterparts to coordinate the man power needs, equipment requirements, and time-frames covered by each unit. Follow-on units can concentrate on the deployment by requesting lists of volunteers in needed career fields, gathering equipment, and preparing personnel. It is expected that most of the troops will be deployed for two weeks with a select few staying for longer periods. Most members are deploying to Southwest Asia to fly missions enforcing the "No-Fly Zone" or to support the aircraft and its mission. There are a number of other support personnel who will be deploying to other bases in Europe. They will be deployed for similar time periods to relieve other units, both active duty Air Force and Air National Guard that are part of the AEF. These members will deploy throughout the entire month of August.

"Gas and go," is how Lt Col. David Augustine, vice commander, 110th Fighter Wing, described Tallil Air Base, located just outside Nasiriya, Iraq. Augustine, who flew 25 combat sorties during Operation Iraqi Freedom, stopped there many times to refuel. Tallil was the last stop for aircraft headed north, deep into Iraq. "It was a real bare base," said Augustine, "and I was glad I didn't have to stay there.

"I got my gas and, boom, I was gone" The 110th Fighter Wing was originally deployed to Kuwait in November 2002. It was a normal rotation and most of the unit returned home in January 2003 but in March, they were called up again, this time for Operation Iraq Freedom. They returned to Kuwait and became part of the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron, at Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base. The pilots flew daily sorties over Iraq; but as the forces pushed further north, the fuel hungry aircraft needed a stopover refueling point. The 332nd looked to the 110th Maintenance Section for volunteers.

"The ones that volunteered to go north were some of our best performers," said Chief Master Sgt. Phil Carlson, 110 Maintenance superintendent. "Some of these guys convoyed up to Tallil and drove fuel trucks over routes that were not secured yet." "The conditions at the air base were not the greatest," said Carlson. "No water, electricity, facilities or cots." "They built up the base from parallel taxiways, holding areas for arming and disarming airplanes, new buildings, facilities, new everything," said Augustine.

"They started with maybe 1,200 people and were pushing up to 9,000 at one point." Carison said they worked from sun up till sun down, in temperatures reaching above 100 degrees. "There wasn't much down time between the refueling, recovering, repairing and launching back out again. We kept the jets mission capable, right above 90 percent, during the heaviest part of battle." "It was quite an experience," added Carlson. "We took some guys that just got out of tech. school and had only been in the unit for maybe six or eight months. They did excellent. We're lucky to have the caliber of people that we have." 2003

On April 5, 2003 Maj. Jim Ewald, 110th Fighter Wing, Battle Creek, was flying sorties over northwest Baghdad. The 3rd Infantry Division had a convoy crossing a bridge and had requested air support. Normally, this would be a routine mission, but this was not a routine day. The weather was ominous and foreboding. Visibility was poor due to low clouds, forcing Ewald to fly his A-10 lower than normal, making the heavily armored aircraft more vulnerable to enemy fire.

Suddenly, the aircraft was hit and Ewald struggled for control. "The aircraft did not respond," said Ewald. He managed to maneuver his A-10 over the southern sector of the city. Then, realizing he had exhausted all options, he triggered his ejection mechanism. The canopy flew off, the seat propelled upward and the parachute activated. "All I could do was enjoy the ride," said Ewald. After landing near a canal, Ewald heard what he thought was enemy gunfire. What he actually heard was the exploding ordnance from his A-10.

Ewald checked himself over and found no injuries. He then called for assistance on his survival radio. Fifteen minutes later, Ewald heard vehicles and saw silhouettes in the horizon. "I heard them speaking English but wasn't sure if they were Americans," said Ewald. "Then someone shouted, 'Hey, pilot-dude, we're Americans.' I knew only an American would call me dude and I knew I was safe." Flying a mere 12 minutes after fellow pilot, Jim Ewald's, aircraft was hit, Maj. Gary Wolf was beginning an adventure of his own. Wolf was flying above the city of Baghdad taking ground fire; but, with limited visibility, he couldn't tell where it was coming from. Suddenly, Wolf's A-10 took a missile to one of its engines. "I knew what happened," said Wolf, "it sounded like a car crash." Amazingly, his aircraft kept flying. During the next ten minutes, Wolf worked through the aircraft's checklists and the A-10 continued to maintain altitude. He flew the plane 150 miles back to the home base in Kuwait and safely landed.

About two months later, Wolf was on another plane, this one headed home. It was around 1:00 p.m. Michigan time. Eleven Battle Creek-bound A-10s and one lone C-130 had been in the air for nine hours. Family and friends strained their eyes, searching the skies. Then finally, a tight v-shaped formation of "dots" appeared, first over the horizon and then overhead. The group cheered. It seemed you could almost touch the aircraft as they performed two fly-bys for the excited but anxious crowd. Then, each plane split from the formation and landed. They taxied down the runway's maze toward arching sprays of water, courtesy of the airfield fire teams.

After what seemed like an eternity, the troops deplaned and shuffled towards the customs line. Then, after this final delay, they sifted through the crowds to find family. Television, newspaper and radio reporters also sifted through the crowds, searching for the good news that comes with military ' homecomings. One-by-one, husbands and wives, parents and children, old friends and families were united. Video cameras zoomed in tight to catch the tears; digital cameras flashed to seal the moment. "We're live at the Battle Creek Air National Guard Base where some of Michigan's first Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans have arrived home. This is truly a moment we've all been waiting for, one that will play out over and over again, in coming days, as our troops return home..." Little did we know, many of those homecomings would be later, rather than sooner.

2005 4 Sep The 110th Fighter Wing, Michigan ANG, deployed forty-four Civil Engineer personnel to Gulfport CRTC to assist rebuilding the base. Numerous equipment assets from Battle Creek (generators, environmental control units) arrived at Camp Shelby, Mississippi to support the establishment of a forward staging area.

2009 For 12 pilots of the 110th Fighter Wing, the weather forecast for their last Unit Training Assembly flying the A-10 had a twist – after landing they could expect to be sprayed down with a mixture of cold water and champagne by friends and family. This tradition is called the “fini-

flight," a venerable tradition with roots going back at least 40 years. According to Master Sgt. Kenneth Glidden, an operations technician with the 172nd Fighter Squadron, fini-flights commemorate the last flight for a pilot in a type of aircraft, organization, or career. "I think it's great," Sgt. Glidden said.

"I can't think of a better way to go out. It's not only for the pilot; it's memorable for the crew chiefs who launch for the last time." Given the normal rate of retirements and reassignments, a fini-flight takes place every couple of months, but with the departure of the A-10C, they have been coming fast and furious. Three four-ship flights completed fini-flights over the November UTA weekend, with two on Saturday and one on Sunday. Upon their return, the aircraft taxied under an arch of water supplied by two fire trucks and then parked on the ramp.

Once all was in order and the engines shut down, the pilots climbed down and were met with a cheerful deluge. "I don't know if this is the best day or the worst day of my life," said a soaking wet Capt. Daniel Drag. For some unlucky pilots, the hosing down on the flight line was not the end of their ordeal. "I'm going to kill the lieutenant that froze my flight suit," joked Maj. Michael Lowes after finding his change of clothing mysteriously had been placed in the squadron freezer.

The fun has a bittersweet side for pilots and ground crews alike. Senior Master Sgt. James Trainor is the weapons element superintendent with the 110th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and his voice fills with pride when he recounts the Wing's achievements with the A-10. "We're 11-0, we've never lost a game, never failed an inspection. I left a year ago yesterday [Oct. 31, 2007] to go to Iraq and Afghanistan." Neither the C-21 nor the C-27 missions have a role for the Weapons Element, so they have been actively engaged in helping members find new places. Some are going with the aircraft to the 127th Wing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, while others are cross-training.

He praised the leadership for checking up on members, helping them with resumes and finding opportunities. Lt. Col. Kier Knapp, an A-10 pilot assigned to the 172nd Fighter Squadron, Battle Creek Air National Guard Base, receives the "fini-flight" ritual shower in November 2008 after his final flight in the A-10 "Warthog" aircraft. Pictured are Ryan Knapp, Lt. Col. Stephan Otto, Lt. Col. Knapp and Capt. Brian Prichard. Some of the pilots will transfer to the 127th Wing, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, the new home for the A-10.

Sgt. Trainor said that cooperation between the two organizations has been good. "They [Selfridge] have especially been impressed with how neighborly we've been about training them." He said there is a strong satisfaction among his shop that they are passing on aircraft in good shape. For prior service members, the transition is less jarring because they are more used to using different airframes. Technical Sgt. Donald Berry, an avionics technician with the 110th Maintenance Squadron, has been at Battle Creek for six years. Before that, he worked with the C-130, HH-60 and the A-10 so he is used to frequent changes in aircraft. What bothers him the most is the disruption to the people.

"I'll miss the camaraderie," he says of the transition "It's a small unit and everyone pretty much gets along." Some members are going to the 110th Communications Squadron while others are leaving for the Component Numbered Air Force.

2009 Col. Rodger Seidel and Maj. Gen. Thomas Cutler stand alongside the new C-21 Learjet at an unveiling ceremony on Dec. 6, 2008 in the Battle Creek Air National Guard Base hangar. The

C-21 is a National Guard Bureau “bridge mission” for the wing, and will provide a segue until the CNAF mission is in place.

After much anticipation, the C-21 was unveiled Dec. 6, 2008 at the 110th Fighter Wing, Battle Creek Air National Guard Base. The jet replaces the A-10C as the flying mission for the 110th. The Wing Commander, Col. Rodger Seidel began the event by thanking the members of the 110th Fighter Wing for their dedication to the A-10 mission and stating that he looks forward to their ongoing commitment to the C-21. “This brief ceremony marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next for the 110th Fighter Wing,” said Col. Seidel. He commented that from 1991 until November 2008, the members of the 110th Wing have flown and maintained the A-10 around the world, from Thailand to Afghanistan.

They have supported eight combat/ contingency deployments, totaling more than 5,000 flying hours, with 45 percent direct combat flying hours. The unit has received four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, one with a valor device, and unit member have received 14 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 10 Bronze Stars. Maj. Gen. Thomas Cutler remarked on the transition of the C-21. “It is a bit sad to see the end of an era,” said Gen. Cutler, “but the C-21 is a bridge to the future.”

State Senator Mark Schauer was the second distinguished visitor and said it was a sad occasion to say goodbye to the A-10 aircraft but that he celebrates the new mission. He extended his thanks to the unit and said, “I will be your full partner going forward.” After their remarks, the C-21 was unveiled with new markings that include the 172nd Airlift Squadron badge on the forward fuselage, Battle Creek on the wing, and Michigan on the tail. So, what about the pilots who have stepped out of the cockpit of the A-10 and into the C-21?

Lt. Col. Stephan Otto and Maj. Matthew Young are the first pilots trained to fly the C-21. Lt. Col. Keir Knapp will complete flight training by March 2009. “It’s a much better quality of life,” said Lt. Col. Otto. “Training for the C-21 is only three weeks in length compared to six months of training for the A-10.” With the possibility of being part of the Joint Operational Airlift Center’s mission which specializes in the airlift of senior defense officials within the continental United States, the C-21 brings more opportunities for the pilots to acquire flying hours, and unlike the A-10, where routine flying is for training; these pilots will fly customers around the United States. “It’s a bridge mission to the cNAF. [Component Numbered Air Force; provisional air component headquarters for potential contingencies.]

The C-21 will give members of the 110th the opportunity to maintain their training and keep the base and equipment functioning,” said Lt. Col. Knapp. All three pilots mentioned that the C-21 has unique challenges such as limited visibility, switch panel layout, and overall pilot situational awareness. The aircraft has difficult rear visibility unlike the A-10, which has a canopy that provides greater visibility. Currently the 110th Fighter Wing has two C-21 jets and expects an additional three to seven aircraft. The maintenance crews are ramping up, and the pilots will likely begin flying in April 2009. The 110th leadership anticipates that the wing’s new mission will be operational and flying within a year.2009

2009 110th Fighter Wing pilots Col. Keir Knapp and Capt. Ryan Schipper took the C-21 on its first executive flight with Maj. Gen. Thomas Cutler, Brig. Gen. Robert Johnston, and Brig. Gen. James Wilson along for the ride. The flight left Battle Creek at 1:50 p.m., October 3, 2009 and

headed north for Traverse City then down to Saginaw at a cruising altitude of 24,000 feet. “It was a demonstration and an opportunity to show the community we are flying again,” said Col. Knapp. Saturday’s flight was fairly typical of what to expect when the mission begins. The only difference is that the C-21 will not likely be flying anyone out of Battle Creek.

“We’ll pick them up at the designated location, fly them to where they need to go and then return here,” said Col. Knapp, who also pointed out that not just general officers will be flying as passengers. “We could fly anyone who puts in a request at JOSAC,” said Capt. Schipper. JOSAC is the Joint Operational Support Airlift Center, a part of the U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

“They’ll prioritize the requests and then we get the call,” said Col. Knapp. Unlike previous flights with the A-10 the C-21 pilots now have to do a safety briefing to the passengers which include a checklist similar to what you would find in the commercial airline industry. “We spent a lot of time planning for this demonstration, and this was the first time we flew with passengers on the C-21,” said Col. Knapp.

Passengers flying on the C-21 can expect to have a 50 pound weight limit on their personal luggage, as space is limited. “Officially it seats eight people but we would really only take six people because eight would crowd the aircraft.” said Col. Knapp. The C-21 has no space compartments; luggage goes in the back of the aircraft behind the seat. The C-21 could begin flying passengers through JOSAC as early as spring of 2010

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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