

415th FIGHTER SQUADRON



LINEAGE

415th Night Fighter Squadron constituted, 8 Feb 1943
Activated, 10 Feb 1943
Inactivated, 1 Sep 1947
Redesignated, 415th Special Operations Training Squadron, 9 Jun 1970
Inactivated, 30 Jun 1975
Redesignated 415th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 15 Sep 1989
Activated, 5 Oct 1989
Redesignated 415th Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1991

STATIONS

Orlando AB, FL, 10 Feb-22 Apr 1943 (air echelon in England, 31 Mar-18 Jun 1943)
La Senia, Algeria, 12 May 1943
La Sebala, Tunisia, 22 Jun 1943
Monastir, Tunisia, 25 Jun 1943 (detachment operated from Protville, Tunisia 23-29 Jul 1943)
La Sebala, Tunisia, 29 Jul 1943
Cassibile, Sicily, 3 Sep 1943
Cantania, Sicily, 5 Nov 1943 (detachments operated from Montecorvino, Italy, 29 Nov-25 Dec 1943 and Gaudo Airfield, Italy, 6 Dec 1943-30 Jun 1944)
Montecorvino, Italy, 26 Dec 1943
Marcianise, Italy, 30 Jan 1944
Pomigliano, Italy, 25 Mar 1944
La Banca, Italy, 11 Jun 1944

Valtone, Italy, 17 Jun 1944
Solonzara, Corsica, 9 Jul 1944 (detachment operated from Piombino, Italy, 23 Jul- 5 Aug 1944)
Le Vallon, France, 1 Sep 1944
Longvic, France, 25 Sep 1944
Ochey, France, 30 Nov 1944
St. Dizier, France, 18 Mar 1945
Braunstadt Germany, 17 Apr 1945
Nordholz, Germany, 2 Oct 1945-15 Feb 1946
Boiling Field, DC, 15 Feb 1946
Shaw Field, SC, 13 Jul 1946-10 May 47
Adak, AK, 19 May-1 Sep 1947
Lockbourne AFB (later Rickenbacker), OH, 1 Jul 1970
Eglin AF Auxilliary Field 9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 19 Jul 1971-30 Jun 1975
Tonopah Test Range, NV, 5 Oct 1989

ASSIGNMENTS

Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics, 10 Feb 1943(air echelon attached to VII Fighter Command, 31 Mar-2 Jul 1943)
Twelfth Air Force (attached to Northwest African Coastal Air Force), 12 May 1943
1st Air Defense (later 62nd Fighter) Wing, 20 Jun 1943
XII Fighter Command (attached to Tunis Fighter Sector),7 Aug 1943
62nd Fighter Wing, c. 3 Sep-5 Dec 1943
64th Fighter Wing, 5 Dec 1943 (attached to 87th Fighter Wing, 3 Jul-5 Aug 1944 with detachment attached to 600 Squadron, Night Fighter (RAF), 23 Jul-5 Aug 1944)
Continental Air Command, 15 Feb 1946
Strategic Air Command, 21 Mar 1946
Tactical Air Command, 13 Jul 1946
Third Air Force, 1 Oct 1946
Ninth Air Force, 1 Nov 1946
Alaskan Department, 27 Jun-1 Sep 1947
4410th Combat Crew Training Wing (later 4410th Special Operations Training Group), 1 Jul 1970
1st Special Operations (later 834th Tactical Composite) Wing, 19 Jul 1971-30 Jun 1975
37th Tactical Fighter Wing, 5 Oct 1989-1 Nov 1991
37th Operations Group, 1 Nov 1991

WEAPON SYSTEMS

A-20, 1943
P-70, 1943
Beaufighter, 1943-1945
P-61, 1945-1946; 1946-1947
B-25, 1946-1947
AC-119, 1970-1972
AC-130, 1971-1975
F-117A, 1989

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

Cpt Gordon D. Tinunons, 10 Feb 1943

Cpt Harold F. Augspurger, 31 Aug 1944

None (not manned), Feb-21 Jul 1946

LTC Leon G. Lewis, 22 Jul 1946-1947

LTC Lawrence H. Meyer, 1 Jul 1971

LTC Joseph S. Stanton, c. 15 Sep 1972

LTC John W. Hudson, 1 Dec 1974-30 Jun 1975

LTC William J. Lake, 5 Oct 1989

LTC Ralph J. Getchell, 3 Nov 1989

LTC Bruce E. Kreidler, 7 Jun 1990

LTC Bruce E. Keider, 8 Jul 1992

LTC William G. Aten III, 25 Feb 1992

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Sicily

Naples-Foggia

Anzio

Rome-Arno

Southern France

Rhineland

Central Europe

Air Combat

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

15 Sep 1970-25 Jul 1971

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

A white Nighthawk, with a red and white halo surrounding its head, symbolizes the F-117A. The white, gray, and black feathers suggest the perfection of F-117A's discretionary weapons delivery capability, its spectral nature, and the maturity of the Stealth mission, while the halo refers to its purity of purpose. The Nighthawk is in an attack position, centered over black mountainous terrain

that is separated by a yellow and red sunset from an advancing ultramarine blue evening sky. This signifies the Air Force's ability to operate with strength and zeal in a night environment. A white moon with stratus clouds in the sky denotes the unit's night time fission. Red streaks emanating from the Nighthawk's claws refer to its ability to stalk prey.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

The Nightstalkers

OPERATIONS

The Army Air Force constituted this squadron as the 415th Night Fighter Squadron on 8 February 1943 and activated it at Orlando Air Base (AB), Florida, two days later on the 10th. At that time, the Army assigned the 415th to the School of Applied Tactics for training in the P-70 fighter, a converted A-20 bomber. That training included daylight and night air interception, ground-controlled interception, navigation, and instrument flying.

On 3 March 1943, an air echelon from the unit left Florida. Twenty days later, the echelon sailed on the vessel Empress of Scotland and arrived in England on the 31st. There, the pilots, engineers, and radar operators trained separately until May 1943, when all elements of the air echelon moved to Ayre, Scotland, for training as a complete unit. The ground element moved from Florida on 22 April 1943 to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and left there a week later on the U.S. Army Transport Shawnee for North Africa. They arrived at Oran, Algeria on 11 May 1943 to begin working and training at the nearby Senia Airdrome. In June 1943, the ground element moved to Tunisia, where it worked with a Royal Air Force night fighter squadron. The air echelon joined the ground troops in early July at Yonastir, Tunisia.

The 415th entered combat as a unit in July 1943, flying the British-made Beaufighter aircraft. Unit pilots flew convoy patrols, night patrols, and intercept scramble. As its first important mission, the 415th flew escort duty for the airborne invasion of Sicily in July 1943. The unit moved to Sicily in early September, and later to Italy in December as the allies continued gain on Axis forces. In Italy, the squadron continued its patrols and even flew cover over the Anzio beachhead during January and February 1944.

In July 1944, the unit moved again to Corsica to take part in the pending invasion of southern France. That invasion occurred in August; the 415th again flew night patrols. After the allied ground forces established beachheads, the squadron actually moved into France, where it supported the American 7th and French 1st Armies with night interception and night intruder sorties. The pilots also patrolled the lines at St. Die and dropped flares to light up targets for the artillery. Through April 1945, the squadron flew patrols and intruder missions, concentrating its attacks on enemy installations, supplies, communications, and troops. Then, the unit moved to Bruanstadt, Germany, where it transitioned from the Beaufighter to the American night fighter, the P-61. The squadron, however, only flew a few missions in this new aircraft before the war ended. Altogether, in World War II the 415th Night Fighter Squadron earned eight campaign streamers and one decoration.

After the war, the squadron switched to routine training until February 1946, when it transferred without people and equipment to Boiling Field, DC, and then to Shaw Field, South Carolina. The unit remained unmanned through July 1946, when new people with P-61s and B-25s arrived. It resumed its training in night fighter techniques until May 1947, when the squadron moved to Alaska to defend the Aleutian island chain. The 415th inactivated on 1 September 1947, and all assigned people were transferred into an all-weather fighter squadron.

The Air Force resurrected the 415th as a Special Operations Training Squadron and activated it on 1 July 1970 at Lockborne AFB (renamed Rickenbacker AFB in 1976), Ohio, to replace the 4413th Combat Crew Training Squadron. There, the squadron provided special operations combat training for aircrews in the AC-119 aircraft. In early 1971, the unit additionally acquired AC-130 aircraft. It moved to Hurlbert Field, Florida, in July 1971 to continue special operations training. At this station, the 415th also gave numerous displays and firepower demonstrations of its capabilities. In October 1972, the squadron transferred its AC-119s to the South Vietnamese Air Force; however, the 415th continued its training mission until 30 June 1975 when it inactivated a second time. The squadron earned one Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceptional service from 15 September 1970 to 25 July 1971.

The 415th did not see action again until it activated as a tactical fighter squadron on 5 October 1989 at the Tonopah Test Range with a mission to fly the F-117A Stealth Fighter. Earlier, on 15 September the Air Force officially changed the unit's name from its previous Special Operations Training Squadron designation. The 415 TFS assumed the mission of the 4450th Test Squadron to become one of two operational F-117A Stealth Fighter squadrons.

In Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the 415th shared honors with the 416 TFS. Augmented with pilots and aircraft of the 417th squadron, they struck terror into the hearts of the Iraqi nation. The Air Force redesignated the squadron as the 415th Fighter Squadron on 1 October 1991. The squadron realigned from under the wing as a subordinate of the 37th Operations Group on 1 November 1991.

June 1971 4413th CCTS transferred from Lockbourne to Hurlburt Field and re-designated the 415th Special Operations Training Squadron. Eight (8) AC-119Ks and six (6) AC130s were assigned to the squadron. Tail numbers for the AC-119s were:

52-5910
52-5911
52-5926
52-5940
53-3187
53-3197
53-7839
53-8145

May 2 1972 18th SOS suffers third Stinger Loss. Operating from the FOL at Bien Hoa, Stinger 41 is shot down near An Loc, RVN. Three of ten crewmembers killed. Last daylight mission for Stinger gunships. The pilot of Stinger 41 was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross.

June/July 1972 Two (2) AC-119s from the 415th SOTS ferried to S.E.A.

October 1972 Six AC-119s from the 415th SOTS at Hurlburt ferried to Phan Rang, RVN with stops at McCord, Elmendorf, Adak, Midway, Wake, Guam, and Clark Air Base, Philippines. Eight days from Hurlburt to Phan Rang.

The 415th Tactical Fighter Squadron came into existence on 5 October 1989 with the people and equipment of the former 4450th TS, including commander Lieutenant Colonel William J. Lake. The 415th TFS provided the six F-117s and pilots who flew the 19 December 1989 combat mission to Panama during Operation Just Cause (see main text and 37th TFW entry). Under contingency plans of the late 1980s, the squadron was considered to be the Atlantic component of the stealth fighter community, expected to 'chop' to US European Command in time of war. In fact, when war came in the Middle East, the squadron chopped to US Central Command during Operation Desert Shield.

The 'Nightstalkers' were the first of the wing's squadrons to be deployed to Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia, in Desert Shield, beginning 26 August 1990. The squadron bore the brunt of the difficult build-up in the Middle East, bolstered by a few personnel and aircraft from the 416th TFS (which deployed in December 1990) and 417th TFS (which remained stateside but provided aircraft and personnel). Commanded in 1990-91 by Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Getchell, the 'Nightstalkers' fought in Operation Desert Storm from the first night, 17 January 1991, until the end on 26 February 1991. The 415th TFS had the first F-117 contingent to return from the Gulf War, eight aircraft which landed at Nellis AFB on 1 April 1991.

Final commander of the 415th TFS was Lieutenant Colonel Bruce E. Kreidler, who remained on board when the squadron's designation was changed. In keeping with USAF reorganisation, the 415th TFS became the 415th FS on 1 October 1991.

415th Fighter Squadron 'Nightstalkers/ later 'Nighthawks'

The 415th FS was the new name for the former 415th TFS, effective 1 October 1991. Lieutenant Colonel Bruce E. Kreidler was commander at the time of the name change. Another change in USAF nomenclature put an end to emblems and nicknames with satanic connotations, no matter obscure: with this change in late 1992 the 'Nightstalkers' lost their proud nickname and became, instead, the 'Nighthawks.'

When the F-117 force moved from Tonopah to Holloman AFB, New Mexico on 5 July 1992, the 37th FW became the 49th FW, but the squadron designation was not, at first changed. For a time, 416th TFS could not take on the name of the 9th Fighter Squadron because that designator was employed (from May 1992) by the F-4E Phantom unit which trains German Luftwaffe pilots; on 30 July 1993 the Phantom unit reverted to its earlier designator as the 20th

FS, a move which enabled the 416th TFS, in turn, to be redesignated 9th Fighter Squadron on that date.

416th Tactical Fighter Squadron 'Ghostriders'

The 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron came into existence on 5 October 1989 with the people and equipment of the former 4451st Test Squadron, but with a new commander. On that date, Lieutenant Colonel Gerald C. Carpenter moved from the inactivated 4453rd Test Squadron to take charge of the 416th TFS. 'Ghostriders'.

The Pacific component of the 37th TFW earmarked for US Pacific Command (meaning Korea) in the event of war, the 'Ghostriders' were not at first chosen for deployment when Operation Desert Storm began in August 1990. As the build-up in the Middle East grew, the decision was made to deploy the squadron, and the long trip to Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia (with a stopover at Langley AFB, Virginia) began on 2 December 1990. Commanded in 1990-91 by Lieutenant Colonel Gregory ('Greg') Gonyea, the 'Ghostriders' fought in Operation Desert Storm from the first night, 17 January 1991, until the end on 26 February 1991.

In the immediate post-Desert Storm era, the 416th TFS made a deployment to Korea where it was part of contingency plans for a conflict there.

Lieutenant Colonel Gonyea was still in command when the squadron underwent its next name change, along with the other F-117 flying units. In keeping with USAF reorganisation, the 416th TFS lost its 'tactical' nomenclature and was redesignated 416th FS on 1 October 1991.

416th Fighter Squadron 'Ghostriders,' later 'Knight Riders'

The 416th Fighter Squadron was the new name for the former 416th TFS, effective 1 October 1991. Lieutenant Colonel Gregory ('Greg') Gonyea was commander at the time of the name change. When the USAF issued its ban on devilish nicknames, the 'Ghostriders' were forced to give up the nickname in which they felt considerable pride, and were renamed the 'Knight Riders'. The change is a curious one, because the taboo on satanic names followed an earlier ban on names deemed not to be 'gender neutral'; apparently no one noticed that knights, in theory at least, are male.

When the F-117 force moved from Tonopah to Holloman AFB, New Mexico, on 5 July 1992, the parent 37th FW relinquished its designation in order to adopt the colours and lineage of the 49th FW. Squadron designations, however, were not changed at first. Serving as an F-117 squadron under the 49th Fighter Wing at Holloman, the 'Knight Riders' were redesignated 8th Fighter Squadron on 30 July 1993.

417th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron 'Bandits'

The 417th TFTS was formed on 5 October 1989 from the assets of the 4453rd Test and Evaluation Squadron, the 'Bandits'. The squadron served as the RTU (replacement training unit) for the F-117 and took over operation of the stealth community's Northrop T-38 Talon chase aircraft.

The 417th TFTS did not deploy during Operations Desert Shield/Storm but provided eight aircraft to stand by at Langley AFB, Virginia, as attrition replacements for the F-117 force in the Middle East. In the event, there was no attrition and the aircraft were not needed. The 'Bandits' were commanded in 1990-91 Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. ('Bob') Maher.

In keeping with USAF reorganisation, the 417th TFTS lost the 'tactical' and 'training' adjectives in its title (although keeping its training duties) and was redesignated the 416th Fighter Squadron on 1 October 1991. Commander at the time was Lieutenant Colonel Barry Horne.

417th Fighter Squadron 'Bandits'

The 417th FS took on its new name on 1 October 1991 at Tonopah, retaining Lieutenant Colonel Barry Horne as commander and its mission as the RTU (replacement training unit) for the F-117.

When the F-117 force moved from Tonopah to Holloman AFB, New Mexico, 5 July 1992, the 37th FW took over the colours and lineage of the 49th FW. Squadron designations, however, were not changed at first. In fact, the 417th FS was the last of the three F-117 squadrons to assume a new identity traditionally associated with its parent wing. Equipped with 10 F-117s and 11 AT-38B Talons, the squadron was redesignated 7th FS in December 1993.

AC-130A, 55-0011, was seen in 1971 at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio. The aircraft is in the Southeast Asia camouflage scheme, and carries a large, colorful TAC badge on the tail. The white IH tail code on the tail was assigned to the 4413th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), 4410th Combat Crew Training Wing (CCTW). This unit was later transferred to Hurlbert AFB, Florida, and became the 415th SOTS, 1st SOW with the AH tail code

AC-130A, 54-1630, is shown as it appeared when it was participating in Operation "Brass Strike VIII" at Pope AFB, North Carolina, in September, 1971. The plane is assigned to the 415th SOTS, 1 SOW, from Hurlbert AFB, Florida. The aircraft has black sides, bottom and tail with the Southeast Asia camouflage on top. The AH tail code and serial number on the tail are white. The colorful TAC badge is carried on the tail, with the 1st SOW badge on the nose. All other markings are red.

415 SOTS
AC130E
69-6567

415th NFS
Activated: Feb. 10, 1943

Inactivated: Sept. 1, 1947

La Senia, Algeria, May 12-June 22, 1943

La Sebala, Tunisia, June 22-25, 1943

Monastir, Tunisia, June 25-July 29, 1943

Note: The air echelon arrived at Monastir from their stay at RAF OTU in England on July

3. Det. Protville, Tunisia, July 23-29, 1943

La Sebala, Tunisia, July 29-Sept. 3, 1943

Cassibile, Sicily, Sept. 3-Nov. 5, 1943

Cantania, Sicily, Nov. 5-Dec. 26, 1943

Det. Montecorvino, Italy, Nov. 29-Dec. 26, 1943

Det. Gaudio, Italy, Dec. 6, 1943-Jan. 30, 1944

Montecorvino, Italy, Dec. 26, 1943-Jan. 30, 1944

Marcianise, Italy, Jan. 30-Mar. 25, 1944

Pomigliano, Italy, Mar. 25-June 11, 1944

La Blanca, Italy, June 11-17, 1944

Valtone, Italy, June 17-July 9, 1944

Solonzara, Corsica, July 9-Sept. 1, 1944

Det. Piombino, Italy, July 23-Aug. 5, 1944

La Vallon, France, Sept. 1-25, 1944

Longvic, France, Sept. 25-Nov. 30, 1944

Ochey, France, Dec. 30, 1944-Mar. 18, 1945

St. Dizier, France, Mar. 18-Apr. 17, 1945

Gross-Gerau, Germany, Apr. 17, 1945-Oct. 2, 1945

Capt. Gordon D. Timmons Feb. 10, 1943-Aug. 31, 1944

Maj. Harold F. Augspurger Aug. 31, 1944-Feb. 15, 1946

First P-61 received: Mar. 20, 1945

First enemy aircraft destroyed by P-61 crew: none

Squadron total enemy aircraft destroyed by P-61 crews: 0

430719	Beaufgr	KV8057	415NFS			LAC	Augsburger, Harold F	Telergma
440118	Beaufgr VI	V8817	415NFS			LAC	Lindsay, Nathaniel H	Gaudio
440122	Beaufgr VI	V8466	415NFS			TOA	Sztanyo, Antonium E	Gaudio
440618	Beaufgr	KW186	415NFS			TOA	Schlueter, Edward A	
440622	Beaufgr	KW128	415NFS			TOA	Fournier, Charles A	

440707	Beaufgr	KW185	415NFS			LAC	Gould, Wallace O	
440723	Beaufgr	KW125	415NFS			LAC	Gould, Wallace C	
440805	Beaufgr	KW127	415NFS			TOA	Bockstege, Henry F	
440821	Beaufgr	V8890	415NFS			TOA	Flanagan, William H	
440825	Beaufgr	V8657	415NFS			LAC	Flannagan, William H	
440827	Beaufgr	KW193	415NFS			LAC	Buoscio, Chester J	
440830	Beaufgr	KW159	415NFS			BOEF	Flanagan, William H	
440916	Beaufgr	MM867	415NFS			CBL	Hanson, James M	Le Vallon/Y-18
440918	Beaufgr	V8862	415NFS			LAC	Giblin, Henry J	Le Vallon/Y-18
440925	Beaufgr	ND140	415NFS			CBLEF	Fournier, Charles A	Lyon (Bron)/Y-6
441007	Beaufgr VI	KW200	415NFS			TOAEF	Giblin, Henry J	Dijon/Y-9
441221	Beaufgr	V8839	415NFS			BOEF	Thomas, Ralph L	{VZ-9179}
441224	Beaufgr VI	BT300	415NFS		A96	TOA	Flanagan, William H	Ochey/A-96
450113	Beaufgr VI	KV969	415NFS		A96	LAC	Lott, Floyd F	Ochey/A-96
450203	Beaufgr VI	V8561	415NFS		A96	KCRL	Gould, Wallace C	{VZ-7299} Ochey/ nr
450220	Beaufgr VI	KV919	415NFS		A96	GL	Lott, Floyd F	Ochey/A-96
450303	Beaufgr VI	KW103	415NFS		A96	LAC	Zollars, Lester R	Ochey/A-96
450310	Beaufgr VI	V8746	415NFS		A96	LAC	Thomas, Ralph L	Ochey/A-96

450313	Beaufgr VI	KW147	415NFS		A96	TAC	Thomas, Nelson G	Ochey/A-96
450331	Beaufgr VI	V-8760	415NFS		St Dizier (A-64)	LAC	Moore, Alvin G	St Dizier (A-64)
450401	Beaufgr VI	V8570	415NFS		A64	KBO	Emanuel, William E	Wessembourg
450401	Beaufgr VI	KV965	415NFS		A64	TOA	Lunger, Dean C	St Dizier/A-64
450409	Beaufgr VI	MM867	415NFS		A64	LAC	Watt, Robert H	St Dizier/A-64
450410	Beaufgr VI	KW147	415NFS		A64	KTOA	Lunger, Dean C	St Dizier/A-64
450414	Beaufgr VI	BT295	415NFS		A64	LAC	Flanagan, William H	St Dizier/A-64
450419	Beaufgr VI	MM879	415NFS		Y72	LAC	Fichter, Edwin P	Braunchardt/Y- 72
450520	A-20B	41-3365	415NFS		Y72	KCR	Granning, Frank W	Bar-Le-Duc/ 1 1/2mi SE
450523	P-61B	42-39547	415NFS		Y72	LAC	Minnis, John W	Halle
450701	L-4H	44-79826	415NFS			TOA	Finnell, Richard C	Braunschardt/Y- 72
450930	L-4J	44-80616	415NFS	64FW	R56	LAC	Collins, Harold E	Kirchheim
451217	AT-6F	44-81782	415NFS		R56	TAC	Criswell, Billy S	Nordholz/R-56
470604	P-61B	43-8271	415NFS			LAC	Hartl, Gabriel A	Great Falls AAF

470826	P-61B	42-39643	415FS		Adak AAF, AK	KCRL	Lindsey, Nathaniel H	Adak AAF, AK
--------	-------	----------	-------	--	-----------------	------	----------------------------	-----------------





Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 10 Nov 2010
Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit History. History and Lineage of the F-117A Stealth Fighter; Organizations. Office of History HQ 37 TFW.

Special Study HO-91-2. Dec 1991.