

3598 COMBAT CREW TRAINING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

3598 Flying Training Squadron
3598 Pilot Training Squadron
3598 Combat Crew Training Squadron

STATIONS

Nellis AFB, NV

ASSIGNMENTS

3595 Flying Training Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

COMMANDERS

Maj Allan S. Harte, #1953

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 3598th CCTS's instructors received approximately 30-hours of lectures on the J73 engine, flight controls, aircraft systems and flight procedures from North American Aviation technical representatives during the upgrade training conducted between April and June. Twenty hours of flying were involved, per instructor, to complete transition and involved actual transition flying time, formation flying, air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery, applied tactics and special weapons delivery.

Instructors who transitioned to the F-86H then ferried aircraft to the base, checked out other pilots within the Training Group and aided the transition of instructors of the 3597th CCTS to the new airplane.

Amidst the transitioning, plans were made for instructors from the 3598th CCTS to fly tow and chase missions during the ATC Weapons and Gunnery Meet at Luke AFB in July. Twenty F-86Hs were slated for utilization during the meet for use by the special weapons delivery team and additional use as support aircraft. The 3598th was relieved of student training during the weapons meet for a number of reasons, among them the decision that the F-86H wasn't living up to expectations in the training role. Classes were small; Class 55-K had five original students and three additional students classified as holdovers. Classes 55-L and 55-M had five students each.

During the period of preparation for the weapons and gunnery meet at Luke AFB, Nellis maintenance personnel were under an incredibly heavy load to deliver mission capable airplanes and the requirements must have seemed unrealistic at times. F-86Es and F-84s were being transferred off the base. F-86Fs and T-33s were being sent off base for IRAN, an in-depth depot level type of maintenance. New aircraft, F-86Hs and F-100s, were being received and the acceptance inspections had to be completed. Twenty-seven aircraft, the best of the lot, had to be maintained in peW; condition for the upcoming weapons and gunnery meet. Despite this requirement, the requirement for aircraft to meet daily training missions had not been reduced. Not surprisingly, maintenance suffered because precious hours were needed to provide training for the new technicians.

The arrival of the F-86H complicated an already difficult maintenance program. The F-86Hs arrived with each aircraft having one of three sub-types of the J73 engine, the base having been advised that it was to prepare for the arrival of aircraft with only one of the engine sub-types. The base had also been told it would receive Block 1 aircraft, armed with .50 calibre machine guns, but instead got Block 10 aircraft armed with 20mm cannon, as was noted earlier. Critical items couldn't be obtained from depots in a timely manner and in June fifteen F-86Hs were out of commission for parts as a result. Thirty-two H models were grounded in June as a result of engine failures.

As might be expected the F-86H, used in the training role, could and did suffer accidents. A 1st Lt. an academic instructor who'd received the Instructor of the Month award in January, was killed in an F-86H tow accident on 13 May.

After the grounding of thirty-two F-86Hs in June, a split phase type of training was initiated at Nellis. The first three F-86H classes weren't affected by this change, but with too few aircraft in commission to continue an all F-86H curriculum, all subsequent classes went through the split phase program. That program entailed each student receiving 10-hours in the T-33, 70-hours in the F-86F and 30-hours in the F-86H. F-86F classes were intended to convert to the split phase program, beginning with Class 55-I. However, before that class could begin the split phase program, it became apparent that logistical support for the F-86H wouldn't be adequate to support even that program. An insufficient number of main-tenance personnel and other factors added to the wing's woes, making it clear that 110 hour split phase program couldn't be properly supported. The split phase program was cancelled. Those F-86F classes that were to have gone into the split phase program received 80-hours in the F-86F instead and the three classes in training in the F-86H had their flying hours reduced from 110 to 80. As a side note, the 80-hour course was considered the minimum a student could complete and still be considered combat capable.

In addition to the engine problems mentioned earlier, problems in the arma-ment and fire control systems were detected that required extensive modifica-tions so that the aircraft could effectively be used as a gunnery trainer. Modification of wing aircraft from the fixed wing leading edge to a slatted wing leading edge only added to the wing's maintenance workload. There appeared to be an optimism nonetheless, as it was expected the F-86H would be a definite asset once its maintenance and logistical problems had been solved. Plans were in hand to phase out the F-86F program during April 1956 and replace it with the F-86H program.

J73 engine turbine failures, which caused the grounding of 32 of the wing's 86 F-86Hs, continued to be a problem for the wing because replacement engines weren't avail-able. As a result, 32 F-86Hs went into temporary storage until new engines arrived, which they did in December 1955. While the arrival of the engines brought relief to the wing, other problems arose that essentially negated the gain the newly arrived engines should have provided. There was an extreme shortage of 20mm ammuni-tion. There were three different ver-sions of the J73 engine in use on base, complicating the logistical sup-port situation. Aircraft support equip-ment was not available in sufficient amounts to meet maintenance unit needs. The J73 engine starters were in short supply and many other items were backordered with some having delivery dates as far out as one year.

Supply problems affected F-86H in-commission rates to such an extent that the percentage of planes out of commission for lack of parts went as high as 40% during the summer of 1955. The arrival of the J73 engines brought the out-of-commission rate down to 10% in December.

Early in 1956, the flow of students entered into the F-86H program was reduced to the point where it corre-sponded to the number of aircraft that would be available for training. A buildup in student production had been planned for the summer of 1956, but was cancelled when it became clear that the necessary aircraft utilization couldn't be achieved.

The situation had deteriorated to the point that Nellis AFB officials determined the most practical way to restore the combat crew training program to its normal student load was to discontinue use of the F-86H in this role. After discussions between representatives from Headquarters USAF ATC and CTAF, which took place in July, the agreement was reached that Nellis should become a "finishing school for Luke and Williams," and graduates from those bases would be sent to Nellis for 30-hours of flying in the F-100. Initial projections placed the F-86H in the first stages of phase out in September 1956. Meanwhile, in February, the 110 hour F-86H program resumed, albeit with a revised course outline.

Nellis F-86Fs were being transferred to Williams AFB during this period, and F-86Hs were coming in from Clovis and directly from the North American Aviation plant.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit yearbook. Nellis AFB, NV. Every Man A Tiger. 1953