

4450th TEST SQUADRON

LINEAGE

(I-Unit)

Activated 11 Jun 1981

Inactivated, 5 Oct 1989

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

4450th Tactical Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

Maj William C. Hepler, 15 Jul 1981

Maj Gerald B. Fleming, 18 Sep 1981

LTC Ervin C. Sharpe, Jr., 21 Jul 1983

LTC John F. Miller, 1 Jun 1985

LTC David T. Holmes, 16 Jan 1987

LTC William J. Lake, 5 Feb 1988-5 Oct 1989

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 21 Feb 2011
Updated:

Sources

4450th Test Squadron (I-Unit) 'Nightstalkers'

The 4450th TS was one of two squadrons (with the 4451 st TS) activated under the 4450th TG on 11 June 1981, some 14 months before the first operational Senior Trend aircraft was delivered. The 'Nightstalkers' were first commanded by Major William C. Helper, who did not become a Senior Trend pilot but performed interim organisational chores until replaced by pilot Lieutenant Colonel Ervin C. ('Sandy') Sharpe.

The 'Nightstalkers' flew the Senior Trend aircraft from late 1982 onwards. The squadron came under command of Lieutenant Colonel John F. Miller (replacing Sharpe) in June 1985, and then of Lieutenant Colonel David T. Holmes on 16 January 1987 (according to one source) or in June 1987 (according to another). Lieutenant Colonel William J. Lake was the final commander of the 4450th TS and remained in place when the squadron was inactivated 5 October 1989. On that date, the squadron's people and equipment remained at Tonopah and the 'Nightstalkers' were redesignated 415th TFS.

4451st Test Squadron (P-Unit) 'Ghostriders' CLV), Nellis AFB, Nevada (later Tonopah)

The 4451st was activated on 11 June 1981 (together with the 4450th TS) under Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Fleming. The 'Ghostriders' operated Vought A-7D aircraft at Nellis. The A-7Ds were used as cover for the real purpose of the stealth fighter group and later as chase or 'companion' aircraft for the Senior Trend. Lieutenant Colonel Medford C. ('Med') Bowman became commander in about 1985. Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Bruce, Jr, who was not qualified in the Senior Trend aircraft, took command in August 1986. There is no indication the 4451 st was ever equipped with F-117s through the date of its inactivation, 5 October 1989. It did, however, become an F-117 squadron when, on that date, it assumed its new identity as the 416th TFS.

4452nd Test Squadron (Q-Unit) 'Goat Suckers'

4452nd Test Squadron 'Goat Suckers' (Q-Unit) began as Detachment 1 of the

4450th and was assigned to Tonopah during the brief period when group headquarters remained at Nellis; the 'Goat Suckers' took on the popular term for the American night hawk, even though Lockheed never succeeded in persuading the USAF to adopt Nighthawk as the nickname for the Senior Trend aircraft, and were formed under Major Alton C. 'Al' Whitley in September 1982.

Major Dennis R. Larson commanded the squadron briefly after Whitley's 1985 departure and was followed by Major Robert D. Williams on 25 July 1985. Lieutenant Colonel Medford (Med') Bowman, who had formerly commanded the P-Unit, moved to assume command of the Q-Unit in August 1986 and served briefly before being replaced on 7 January 1987 by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur P. ('Art') Weyermuller. Weyermuller was in turn replaced by Lieutenant Colonel James G. Ferguson on 14 August 1987. The squadron was inactivated on 30 May 1989, becoming the only stealth unit not to acquire a new identity as part of the 37th TFW later in the year.

4453rd Test and Evaluation Squadron (Z-Unit) 'Grim Reapers'

The 4453rd Test and Evaluation Squadron 'Grim Reaper' (Z-Unit) was activated on 1 October 1985 under Lieutenant Colonel Roger Locher to become the third Senior Trend flying squadron in the 4450th Tactical Group. In January 1989, this F-117 squadron began preparations to take charge of chase, or 'companion', aircraft with delivery of the first Northrop T-38 Talons that month; this new role became official on 30 May 1989, when the Vought A-7D unit at Nellis was inactivated.

Continuing to fly F-117s and T-38s, the 4453rd also took over the local area familiarisation function which had been an extra duty for the group's R-Unit, its small flight-test organisation, also inactivated on 30 May 1989. The final commander of the 4453rd TES was Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Groesch. The squadron was inactivated on 5 October 1989, when its people and equipment, remaining in place at Tonopah, became the 417th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron.