

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Visit to Langley AFB, Base Operations

Type of event: Orientation/Briefing

Date: 10/06/03

Special Access Issues: None

Prepared by: Miles Kara

Team Number: 8

Location: Langley AFB, VA

Participants - Commission: John Farmer, Kevin Shaeffer, Miles Kara

Participants - Non-Commission:

Andrew Huddleston: Dep Chief, Plans, Integration & Transformation Division, AF/XOHP

Colonel Pamela Stevenson: ACC/ JAA, Judge Advocate General

Major Chris Bailey: First Fighter Wing, Command Post OIC, on 9/11

SSGT Theodore Jackson: First Fighter Wing, Senior Controller on 9/11

MSgt Robert Atchinson, First Fighter Wing [escort]

MSgt David Somdahl, 119th Fighter Wing, Public Affairs [escort]

Background

The purpose of this session was to establish the efficiency and effectiveness of the working relationship between the 119th Fighter Wing, Detachment One, a tenant unit, and the 1st Fighter Wing, a host unit. This relationship is different than at Otis AFB where the 102d Fighter Wing is the only Wing on base. Staff found no relevant issues. Detachment One personnel, in multiple contacts during the Staff visit, expressed satisfaction with the support provided and were glad that someone was providing a 24/7 operation available to them. On the other hand, the presence of Detachment One to perform the air defense mission meant that the 1st Fighter Wing could concentrate on its global mission.

Major Points

Langley Base Operations controls the klaxon and signal lights used during scramble operations. All concerned entities in the Langley area, to include Norfolk Tower, are on the same NEADS scramble line. One call alerts all elements needed to allow an air defense scramble to proceed. The procedures are essentially the same today as they were on 9/11. Staff was provided a tour [REDACTED]

9/11 Classified Information

[REDACTED] There were no procedures in place that hinder the process—a call is received and the appropriate actions are taken without delay. In other words, First Fighter Wing has imposed no arbitrary local controls that impede the air defense mission.

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STAFF COMMENT: Staff was concerned that the host-tenant relationship might work to the detriment of the air defense mission. What we observed was a simple process, well understood and easily executed at the operator level. Since air defense operations must be seamlessly integrated with a multitude of other base operations and activities it makes sense that the host unit be in the activation loop and that the tenant unit be relieved of the responsibility to maintain its own 24/7 base operations. The klaxon and signal lights are displayed in multiple locations where the alert pilots are quartered, so there is no delay because Detachment One does not control the alerting aspect of the operation.

The First Fighter Wing exercises command and control of Detachment One only in-so-far as needed to facilitate overall base operations, as described above.

Calls and command and control operations were not recorded on 9/11. Event logs were previously provided in response to an earlier Commission document request. Personnel contacted do not recall any calls concerning either AA77 or UA93, specifically.

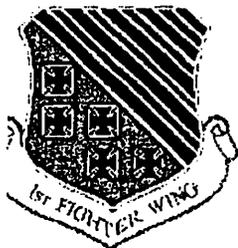
Dating to 1989, personnel contacted recalled no instance where they were exposed to or even thought of the notion of a hijacking for suicide or weapon-of-mass-destruction purposes. Nor did they recall any training or exercises that dealt with multiple hijackings. The common picture of a hijacking prior to 9/11 was to use the airplane to go somewhere.

USAF fighter aircraft are in the air constantly. Staff was told that the local sortie rate (a sortie is one flight by one aircraft) approximates 48 per day. On 9/11, for example, a 2v4 training event was scheduled involving two Detachment One aircraft maneuvering against four First Fighter Wing aircraft.

Staff was provided a tour of the Langley Control Tower and was able to gain an appreciation of how the scramble proceeded on 9/11. Langley has a single runway (260-8), essentially east-west. The 119th Detachment One hangers are isolated on the north side at the extreme western end of the runway, a configuration that allows them, using a dedicated ramp, to literally take off from the hanger and be well in motion by the time they enter the runway proper. The entire Langley complex is being renovated and at the time of Staff visit the air defense mission was being performed from a south location in First Air Wing centered on the runway.

Following information was obtained from the internet on 10/8/03

1st Fighter Wing [1st FW]



As the host unit at Langley Air Force Base, Va., the 1st Fighter Wing operates and maintains one of the largest fighter bases in the Air Force's Air Combat Command. ACC's mission is to provide the world's best combat air forces delivering rapid, decisive air power anytime, anywhere.

The wing's primary mission is to work as a team to be ready to deploy, deter and win, setting the standard in air supremacy. To accomplish its mission, the men and women of the 1st Fighter Wing are broken out into four groups: the 1st Operations Group, the 1st Logistics Group, the 1st Support Group and the 1st Medical Group. These groups are further broken down into 21 squadrons, including three F-15 fighter squadrons with 54 primary assigned F-15Cs: the 27th FS, known as the "Fighting' Eagles"; the 71st FS, known as the "Ironmen" and the 94th FS, also known as the "Hat-in-the-Ring Gang".

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To accomplish its dynamic and challenging mission, the wing flies the Air Force's air superiority fighter, the F-15 Eagle, which entered Air Force operational service at Langley in January 1976. Fully operational in December 1976, the wing is now equipped with 66 assigned F-15s.

The 1st FW has a long and distinguished history. Known as the 1st Pursuit Organization and Training Center in World War I, the unit recorded the first confirmed aerial victory of the war April 14, 1918, as Lt. Douglas Campbell of the 94th FS downed a German Pfalz D-3. The 1st Pursuit Group ended the war with 202 confirmed kills.

During World War II the 1st Fighter Wing again excelled, winning three Distinguished Unit Citations for outstanding performance of duty. Redesignated as the 1st Fighter Group, the unit introduced the P-38 Lightning into the war, flying more than 20,000 sorties on 1,405 combat missions, and scoring more than 400 aerial kills.

The wing continued its distinguished history by becoming the first operational F-15 wing in the Air Force in 1976.

In its long tradition of "firsts," the 1st Fighter Wing rapidly deployed Aug. 7, 1990, in support of Operation Desert Shield, being the first U.S. Air Force unit to establish air superiority over the skies of Saudi Arabia. During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the wing's two deployed squadrons flew more than 6,200 sorties for a total of nearly 25,000 air hours.

In 1999, the wing's 74th Air Control Squadron participated in Operation Allied Force when it deployed to Hungary to monitor and control air traffic. More recently the 1st First Fighter has supported both Operation Southern Watch in Southwest Asia and Operation Northern Watch in Turkey.

During a normal day's flying operation at Langley, the wing will launch about 90 fighter training missions in air-to-air combat, aerial gunnery and air defense intercepts. Most flying operations are conducted in dedicated air space over the Atlantic Ocean off the Virginia and North Carolina coasts.

The wing has participated in a wide variety of exercises and deployments across the United States, in Canada and overseas to hone its combat skills. The wing's many deployments include the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Denmark in Europe; Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in Southwest Asia; Turkey and Iceland.

The 1st Fighter Wing was restructured from the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing Oct. 1, 1991, as part of the Air Force's reorganization of its aircraft assets.

The 1st Fighter Wing was:

- The first U.S. group-level unit to enter air combat.
- The first U.S. unit to destroy enemy aircraft in World War I.
- The parent unit of the first winner of the Medal of Honor for aerial combat.
- The parent unit of the two highest scoring U.S. aces in World War I.
- The first fighter unit to deploy en masse over the North Atlantic.
- The first U.S. unit to destroy a German aircraft in World War II.
- The first U.S. jet fighter unit.
- The first operational unit to fly the F-15.
- The first fighter unit to deploy in support of Operation Desert Shield.

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[Classification]

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