



# FACT SHEET

354th Fighter Wing Public Affairs  
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Eielson AFB, AK 99702-1895

## 18th Fighter Squadron

### Mission

The 18th Fighter Squadron conducts air operations with more than 20 F-16C/D combat-ready fighter aircraft that provide all-weather close air support, air strike control, combat search and rescue, interdiction, strategic attack, and defensive and offensive counter-air.

The F-16s LANTIRN system, coupled with Night Vision Goggles make the “Blue Foxes”

the most advanced night-capable fighters in the world. The 18th FS flies a yearly training program of about 4,400 sorties and 6,400 flying hours.



### History

The 18th Fighter Squadron was constituted the 18th Pursuit Squadron Dec. 22, 1939, and was activated at Moffet Field, Calif., Feb. 1, 1940. The 18th FS moved to Elmendorf Field, Alaska, Feb. 21, 1941, and began flying P-36s.

Redesignated the 18th Fighter Squadron May 15, 1942, the 18th FS participated in combat operations in the northern Pacific, as well as aiding the defense of Alaska during World War II. Throughout WWII, the 18th FS flew the P-40, P-39, P-38 and P-51 aircraft.

Redesignated the 18th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron in 1952, the squadron began operations at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport as part of Air Defense Command's Continental Defense Force. There, the 18th FS flew F-51s and later F-86s. In July of 1954, the 18FS moved to Ladd Air Force Base, Alaska, where for three years it flew the F-89 Scorpion and carried out air defense operations with Alaskan Air Command.

In August of 1957, the 18th FS was transferred to Wurtsmith AFB, Mich., where it transitioned to F-102s. From May 1960 until its inactivation in 1971, the 18th FS operated from Grand Forks AFB, N.D., as an integral part of the interceptor force of Air (later Aerospace) Defense Command. There, the 18th FS flew the F-101 Voodoo.

The 18th FS activated in 1977 at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska and was redesignated the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Its mission was to provide tactical air and defense operations using the F-4E. In January of 1981, the 18th FS was transferred to Eielson AFB, Alaska. On Jan. 1, 1991, the 18th FS received its first F-16C. The squadron was redesignated the 18th Fighter Squadron June 1, 1991.

In 1997 elements of the 18th FS deployed to Singapore and Malaysia to take part in dissimilar air combat tactic training as part of exercise Commando Sling and Cope Taufan, respectively. The Cope Taufan deployment marked the first time Pacific Air Forces' F-16s had flown against MiG29s.

The unit deployed to Al Jabar AB, Kuwait, October-December 1998 to support Operation Southern Watch.

Later, the squadron deployed to Incirlik AB Turkey, Sept-Dec 2000, employing 5 F-16 aircraft and 110 personnel, **conducting the first ever Combat Search and Rescue support tasking for an F-16 squadron in support of Operation Northern Watch.**

After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11/01, the 18th FS was called to generate eight aircraft for Alaska NORAD air defense during Operation Noble Eagle. Although the aircraft never had to launch, the squadron was poised and ready to roll.

The Blue Foxes next deployment was to Al Jaber AB, Kuwait, Dec 2001-Mar 2002 to support simultaneous combat operations for Operations Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom. They flew more than 3,200 hours in only 3 months, an amazing feat for the 142 Blue Foxes who deployed with only 10 aircraft. During that time, the 18th FS flew missions in support of Operation Anaconda, including one in the Shah-I-Kot valley on March 2 when U.S. forces, engaged in a firefight with Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, called for aerial assistance. A number of Blue Foxes responded, dropping bombs with pinpoint accuracy on the opposing forces. Two 18 FS pilots received Distinguished Flying Crosses for their efforts.

The 18 FS last deployment was to Andersen AFB, Guam in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Mar 2003. The 18 FS last exercise was Commando Sling, October 2003.

### **F-16 Fighting Falcon**

The F-16 Fighting Falcon, assigned to the 18th Fighter Squadron, is a compact, multi-role fighter aircraft. Its highly maneuverable design has proven itself in air-to-air combat and air-to-surface attack.

In an air combat role, the F-16's maneuverability and combat radius (distance it can fly to enter air combat, stay, flight and return) exceed that of all potential threat fighter aircraft. It can locate targets in all weather conditions and detect low-flying aircraft in radar ground clutter. In an air-to-surface role, the F-16 can fly more than 500 miles, deliver its weapons and return to its starting point. Its all-weather and nighttime capability allows the F-16 to accurately deliver ordnance during non-visual bombing conditions.

The pilot has excellent control of the F-16 because of its "fly-by-wire" system. This system uses electrical wires to relay commands to the flight controls rather than the usual cable and linkage controls. For easy and accurate control of the aircraft during high G-force combat maneuvers, a side stick controller is used instead of the conventional center-mounted stick. Hand pressure on the side stick controller sends electrical signals to actuators of flight control surfaces such as ailerons and rudder.

Eielson's F-16C/D aircraft have two advanced systems: LANTIRN and Global Positioning System hardware. The LANTIRN system allows night and weather penetration, mobile target detection and track, rapid employment of Maverick missiles, and highly accurate range estimation for precision attack of fixed targets. GPS increases accuracy of position, velocity and time information, and enables accurate all-weather coordination bombing.

*(Current as of Dec 2003)*