



FACT SHEET

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

355th Fighter Squadron

Mission

The 355th Fighter Squadron conducts air operations with more than 20 A/OA-10 combat-ready aircraft providing air, ground and sea commanders with close air support, air strike control, air interdiction, joint air attack team, joint maritime, escort, and search-and-rescue missions.

Night vision goggles allow pilots to conduct missions under the cover of darkness. The squadron also provides Battalion Air Liaison Officers for the Army's 172nd Infantry Brigade (Separate) in Alaska, and the 2nd and 3rd Brigades in Hawaii. The ALOS provide expert advice to Army forces on the use of aircraft and the tactical employment of close air support assets in the form of ground forward air controllers. The 355 FS flies a yearly training program of about 4,300 sorties and 7,000 flying hours.



History

The 355th Fighter Squadron was activated Nov. 15 1942 at Hamilton Field, Calif., flying the P-39 Airacobra. The unit trained in California, Nevada, Oregon and New York before transferring to the 9th Air Force in England, November 1943. There, the "*Pugnacious Pups*" received the first P-51 Mustangs flown by the USAAF in Europe and began, almost immediately, to fly combat missions. Initially they escorted bombers to targets in Frankfurt, Leipzig, Augsburg, and Schweinfurt, Germany.

In April 1944, the squadron shifted from bomber escort to ground attack duties flying dive-bombing and strafing missions against targets such as marshaling yards, bridges and enemy airfields. After D-Day, in support of General Patton's 3rd Army, the unit helped establish the model for the joint close-air-support operations it conducts today.

During the critical first days of the Ardennes Offensive, the 355 FS was one of the few units to provide the air support that blunted German armored spearheads – only days after transitioning to a new aircraft, the P-47 Thunderbolt. After the German surrender, the unit was inactivated March 31, 1946.

Reactivated as the 355th Fighter Day Squadron at Myrtle Beach AFB, S.C., on Nov. 19, 1956, the renamed "*Fightin' Falcons*" flew the F-100D Super Sabre. The 355 FS supported NATO training with numerous deployments between 1958 and 1965 and, in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis in late 1963, deployed to

McCoy AFB, Fla. The unit went to Southeast Asia and deployed to Phu Cat AB, South Vietnam in 1968, flying close air support, interdiction, search and rescue, and helicopter escort missions from January 1968-November 1970. The unit flew more than 14,000 combat sorties in the F-100D.

The squadron returned to Myrtle Beach in late 1970, and on Dec. 14, 1970, received the new A-7D Corsair II. In the fall of 1972, the 355 FS deployed to Korat Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, as the first A-7 wing to fight in the Southeast Asian campaign. In 10 weeks of combat, the unit participated in the Linebacker II campaign, generated over 4,000 sorties, and was credited with 22 rescues of downed airmen. The unit returned home in April 1974.

In February 1978, the 355 FS received the new A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft, the "*Warthog*," to become the second operational squadron in the nation's first A-10 wing. In August 1990, the 355 FS returned to combat operations, deploying to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in support of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The unit inflicted heavy damage to enemy armor and artillery emplacement, cut off enemy supply lines, and conducted combat search and rescue missions. The squadron went on to claim its share of the 4,200 artillery, tank, and other vehicle kills in Operation Desert Storm.

Inactivated March 31, 1992 the 355 FS was reactivated at Eielson AFB, Alaska Aug. 20, 1993 flying the A/OA-10 aircraft. The unit's primary missions now included air strike control, close air support, interdiction, joint air attack team, escort, and combat search and rescue.

In October 1998, the 355 FS deployed to support Operation Southern Watch. Only two months later, the Warthogs saw their second tour of combat duty over Iraq while participating in the Dec. 16-19, 1998, Operation Desert Fox strike missions. In 2 ½ months, the 355 FS flew 597 combat and combat support sorties leading up to, then conducting, National Command Authority directed strikes on Iraqi military facilities and suspected weapons of mass destruction storage areas. They achieved 100 percent target hit rate.

The unit's last deployment was to Al Jaber AB, Kuwait, in support of Operation Southern Watch, January - March 2001. The 355 FS last exercise was to Hurlburt Field, Fla., to train with Special Forces units, October 2003.

A/OA-10 Thunderbolt II

The A/OA-10 Thunderbolt II, assigned to the 355th Fighter Squadron, is Eielson's close air support and forward air control aircraft. Working side-by-side with the F-16, the OA-10 is used to direct air strikes in support of Army forces in Alaska, while the A-10 performs close air support missions.

Equipped with rockets, flares and other light ordnance, the OA-10 can perform many other missions, including observation, armed reconnaissance, ground attack, gunfire spotting for ground forces, target marking, search and rescue, and night/flare illumination.

The A/OA-10 is a highly reliable, austere and rugged aircraft that may be operated from highways, semi-improved runways and dry or frozen lakebeds, with little support besides fuel and ordnance re-supply. All routine maintenance can be performed without ladders or stands, and the single-point-refueling receptacle is at chest level in the left wheel nacelle.

The A/OA-10 is designed to survive in the very dense anti-aircraft environment of Europe. Most parts, like the engines, control surfaces, wheels and flaps are interchangeable left and right. Nothing behind the nose section has any compound curves, so any damaged panels can be cut from sheet metal and simply bolted on. One-third of a main wing, one vertical stabilizer, one engine, half of the horizontal stabilizer and everything forward of the cockpit can be shot away and the aircraft will still fly.

(Current as of Dec 2003)