

Michigan Air National Guard

Korean War Overview

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The Korean War prompted the first major mobilization of the Michigan Air National Guard, less than five years after the Michigan ANG had been reorganized independent from the Michigan Army National Guard. The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The war ended with an armistice signed on July 27, 1953.

Like all state Air National Guard units, Michigan's ANG was officially established on Sept. 18, 1947, when the U.S. Air Force was created as an independent component of the U.S. Armed Forces. Three and a half years later, essentially the entire Michigan ANG was mobilized due to the conflict in Korea. The Michigan units from the Detroit area – the 107th Fighter Squadron (Jet) and the 171st Fighter Squadron, both of which had been operating at Detroit Metro Airport – were deployed to Luke Air Force Base, and there re-designated as the 127th Pilot Training Wing. The Battle Creek-based 172nd Fighter Squadron was then sent to Detroit, on active duty, and assigned to Air Defense Command at Selfridge Air Force Base (today Air National Guard Base). The Michigan ANG's 127th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron was mobilized and sent to Fort Williams, Maine.



Above and below, a Michigan Air National Guard F-84 Thunderjet at Luke Air Force Base, circa 1952.



During the Korean War era, all three Michigan flying squadrons were components of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Fighter Group, which was command by Lt. Col. Donald W. Armstrong, January 1950-February 1951; Col. Henry J. Amen, February 1951-September 1952; and Col. Magnus B. Marks, September 1952-October 1958.

The 107th Fighter Squadron in the Korean era

In the spring of 1950, the 107th Bomb Squadron Light converted from B-26 Marauders to F-84 Thunderjets and on 1 July, 1950, was re-designated as the 107th Fighter Squadron (Jet). The F-84 was the first jet-powered aircraft assigned to the Michigan Air National Guard. On Feb. 1, 1951, the 107th was mobilized for the war and deployed to Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. On Feb. 10, 1951, the 107th and the 171st stood up the newly-created 127th Pilot Training Wing, Air Training Command, at Luke. 107th Airmen officially began training new pilots on March 1, 1951, initially training new Airmen to fly the F-51 Mustang (an aircraft 107th Airmen had flown prior to being assigned the B-26 at home station). Training with the F-51 lasted only a few weeks before the training moved to the F-84. The 107th remained on duty at Luke through Sept. 11, 1952, when it was released from active duty and returned to the Michigan Air National Guard. After the 107th returned to Michigan, it transitioned into the F-86 Sabre, and continued to operate at Detroit Metro Airport, which was then known as Detroit-Wayne Major Airport.

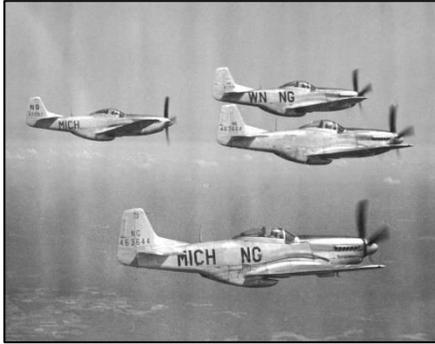
The 171st Fighter Squadron in the Korean era

In the spring of 1950, the 171st was converted from F-51 Mustangs to F-84 Thunderjets. On Feb. 1, 1951, the 171st was mobilized for the war and deployed to Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. On Feb. 10, 1951, the 107th and the 171st stood up the newly-created 127th Pilot Training Wing, Air Training Command, at Luke. 171st Airmen officially began training new pilots on March 1, 1951, initially training new Airmen to fly the F-51 Mustang. Training with the F-51 lasted only a few weeks before the training moved to the F-84. The 171st remained on duty at Luke until Nov. 1, 1952, when it was released from active duty and returned to Michigan. After the 171st returned to Michigan, it was re-designated as the

171st Fighter-Bomber Squadron and transitioned back to the F-51 Mustang for about a year before transitioning again into the F-86 Sabre. Back in Michigan, the squadron continued to operate at Detroit Metro Airport for the next two decades.

The Michigan ANG at Luke AFB

Luke Army Air Field was the largest fighter training base in the Army Air Forces during World War II. The base was deactivated Nov. 30, 1946, about a year after the war ended. After several years of relative dormancy, the base was re-activated as Luke Air Force Base on Feb. 1, 1951, for use as a training site. The Michigan ANG units arrived at



Michigan Air National Guard F-51 Mustangs, circa 1951.

Luke on Feb. 23, opening shuttered World War II buildings for use as the new USAF Air Crew School (Fighter-Bomber/Escort). On Nov. 1, 1952, the active-duty 3600th Flying Training Wing (Fighter) was stood up and assumed the primary flight training duties at the base, allowing the two Michigan squadrons to be released from active service.

The 172nd Fighter Squadron in the Korean era

The Battle Creek-based 172nd was mobilized on Feb. 1, 1951, re-designated as the 172nd Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, and assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing, part of the Air Defense Command, at Selfridge Air Force Base. The squadron was one of 16 ANG flying squadrons activated on the same day and assigned to ADC at locations around the nation. The 172nd was flying F-51 Mustangs prior to the mobilization and continued to be assigned that aircraft through the end of the war. The 172nd remained on active duty at Selfridge through Nov. 1, 1951, when the

squadron's mission – and aircraft – were assigned to the active duty 431st Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, which was stood up the same day. Following the demobilization, the 172nd returned to state control and home station at Kellogg Air National Guard Base in Battle Creek. It continued to fly the F-51 Mustang after demobilization until transitioning to the F-86 Sabre in 1954.

The 127th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron in the Korean era

The 127th AC&WS was one of eight similar command & control ANG units from across the nation mobilized on Sept. 1, 1951. The Michigan squadron was assigned from its home base at Detroit Metro Airport to Fort Williams, a shore defense fort in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. The fort provided the harbor defense for the active shipping facilities in Portland, Maine. The squadron was assigned to the 4711th Air Defense Wing, providing command and control, operating the TPS-1B long-range radar system, for several fighter-interceptor squadrons assigned to the region. The 127th AC&WS remained on active duty for exactly two years, demobilizing and returning to home station at Detroit Metro Airport on Sept. 1, 1953. The active-duty 4711th was in operation for less than five years in total and was re-assigned in early 1956 to Selfridge Air Force Base. The 4711th was de-activated on July 8, 1956. The 127th AC&WS was de-activated in the 1960s.