

Selfridge-related facts about Sept. 11, 2001

Airborne F-16s Facts

Fact 1: Two F-16 Fighting Falcons were returning from a training mission in northern Michigan at the time of the terror attacks. At the time, they were out of ammunition and only had enough fuel to return to the base. Though contacted by higher authorities, contrary to some media depictions they were not diverted in attempt to intercept any high-jacked planes. The aircraft landed at Selfridge and were immediately re-

armed and re-fueled to await new orders.

Fact 2: On the afternoon of Sept. 11, F-16s from Selfridge, flown by Lt. Col. (then major) Douglas Champagne and Major Gen. (then colonel) Robert Johnston, flew an armed combat air superiority mission over Detroit, one of more than 1,000 such missions the 107th Fighter Squadron would perform over the next several years



“We were up there to re-establish air superiority – because that day we lost it. ”
Major Gen. Johnston, now the commander, Michigan Air National Guard. Quote from 5-year anniversary recollection story: <http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dmva/>

Alert Mission Facts

Alert Standup: The Cold War-era 24-hour alert mission had ended at Selfridge in the late 1980s. During the initial standing-up of the Operation Noble Eagle mission, aircraft maintainers and other personnel slept in tents near the Selfridge flight line to be ready to respond to any contingency.

Alert response: Selfridge aircraft were continuously in the air over the Detroit region for more than a week after the Sept. 11 attacks. After the first week, alert aircraft flew irregular patrols and responded to calls as directed.



Alert challenges/honors: The 127th Wing maintained the alert mission despite once having to relocate the flying unit to Battle Creek for much of the summer of 2002 due to a major reconstruction of the runways at Selfridge. The fighter squadron was named the Outstanding Air National Guard Flying Unit by the Air Force Association in 2002 and 2005.

Deployment Facts

Deployment Fact I: Between Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 1, 2011, approximately 3,816 Airmen from the 127th Wing have been deployed. (There are about 1,700 people currently in the 127th Wing).

Deployment Fact II: About 150 members of the 127th Wing were already deployed to Saudi Arabia at the time of the terror attacks. They were operating in support of Operation Southern Watch to enforce a no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

Deployment Fact III: The 127th Wing's flying squadrons (The 107th Fighter Squadron and the 171st Airlift Squadron –now the 171st Air Refueling Squadron) have deployed numerous times over the past decade in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Homeland Security Expansion at Selfridge

Operational working units on base:

HQ Detroit Sector Border Patrol (USBP)
Great Lakes Office of Air and Marine (OAM) Operational Integration Center (OIC) HQ Northern Region, Office of Air and Marine

We have uniformed Agents and Officer from all three law enforcement arms of Customs and Border Protection (CBP):

United States Border Patrol
Office of Air and Marine
Office of Field Operations
Currently have over 200 personnel working on base who work for CBP.

Only HQ Detroit Sector existed at Selfridge prior to 2001.



From the 127th Wing Commander

“Sept. 11, 2001, was the defining moment for a generation of Americans. Since that time, Airmen, Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen from Selfridge have deployed to places near and far to not only defend our freedoms, but to help others to secure freedom and democracy as well. At the same time, Selfridge has become a key center for Dept. of Homeland Security operations to protect and secure our northern border,” said Col. Michael Thomas, commander, 127th Wing.

Aircraft changes:

Beginning in 2008, the 127th Wing has changed aircraft and now flies the KC-135 Stratotanker, an air-to-air refueler, and the A-10 Warthog, a ground-attack aircraft.

After standing 24-hour alert since Sept. 11, 2001, the 107th Fighter Squadron stood down from alert and passed that mission to the 180th Fighter Wing of the Ohio Air National Guard in Toledo on Oct. 1, 2008. The 107th has since transitioned to flying A-10 aircraft, which is not used for air superiority missions.

“Over the past 10 years, some of the finest young men and women in America have risen their right hands and been sworn in to our armed forces – and done so knowing full well that they were likely to be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

As I’ve worked with the young Airmen who have enlisted here at Selfridge over the past 10 years, I am convinced that our country is now being served by a new ‘greatest generation,’” said Col. Michael Thomas, commander, 127th Wing.



F-16 Fighting Falcon



C-130 Hercules