



474th Tactical Fighter Wing Operations Constant Guard V and Linebacker II

The **474th Tactical Fighter Wing (Deployed)**, equipped with 48 F-111A aircraft assigned to the 429th and 430th Tactical Fighter Squadrons arrived at Takhli RTAB on TDY from Nellis AFB, NV on 27 Sep 1972. This movement was part of Operation Constant Guard V.

The 474th was sent there to participate in combat operations when the United States resumed large scale bombing of North Vietnam. Their first combat mission, started only hours after their arrival at Takhli, resulted in the disappearance of one of the aircraft (**Ranger 23**, 67-078, Coltman / Bret) and a temporary cancellation of further F-111 missions. Despite this bad start, F-111s gave a great accounting of themselves over the next few months with exceptional bomb damage assessments while often operating in conditions when other aircraft types could not strike. Unfortunately, the wing lost three more aircraft in the first 60 days of the deployment (17 Oct, **Coach 33**, 67-066 Hockridge / Graham; 7 Nov, **Whaler 57**, 67-063 Brown / Morrissey and 20 Nov, **Burger 54**, 67-092, Stafford / Cafferelli).

During Linebacker II, the intensive bombardment of North Vietnam (18 to 29 Dec 72), the wing flew 154 combat sorties, all night, single ship and low level with excellent BDA. Two aircraft were lost (18 Dec, **Snug 40**, 67-099, Ward / McElvain and 22 Dec, **Jackal 33**, 67-068, Sponeybarger / Wilson) but fortunately the crew from **Jackal 33**, survived and were returned with the POW prisoner release in April of 1973. In early 1973, due in-part to the superb efforts of the 474th TFW, the North Vietnamese government agreed to a resumption of peace negotiations. This resulted in a suspension of Linebacker II bombing operations and the beginning of a long process to bring the costly conflict in SEA to a conclusion. On 22 Mar 72, the 430 TFS (without aircraft) was returned to Nellis AFB and replaced by the 428 TFS.

347th Tactical Fighter Wing and Palace Lightning

On 30 July 1973 the TDY status of the 474th TFW ended. The 428th and 429th TFS were assigned to the newly activated **347th Tactical Fighter Wing** (previously assigned to Mt. Home AFB, ID, but had been deactivated there in Oct 72.) The aircraft tail code was changed from **NA** to **HG** with a red tail fin for the 428 TFS and a yellow tail fin for the 429 TFS.

For a brief two-week period the 347th flew combat operations into Cambodia until 15 August, 1973 when the last wartime mission of the Vietnam Era was flown. After the cease-fire, the wing was maintained in a combat-ready status for possible contingency actions.

During the period Sep 72 to Aug 73, the F-111s flew more than 4000 combat sorties with the loss of seven aircraft (six discussed above plus 67-072 which was involved in a takeoff accident on 20 Feb 73).

During January 1974 the Secretary of Defense announced a realignment of Thailand resources, with the final pullout of air resources by the end of 1976. In June 1974, four F-111s from the 347th TFW flew from Takhli to Osan Air Base South Korea and conducted live weapons demonstrations for Republic of Korea and US officials at Nightmare Range.

The USAF left Takhli under Operation Palace Lightning when the 347 TFW's F-111s were transferred to Korat RTAFB on 12 Jul 74. On 14-15 May 75, F111s from the 347 TFW participated in the rescue of the SS Mayaguez which had been captured by Cambodian Communist forces. The wing was deactivated on 30 Jun 75 and the F-111s returned to the 474 TFW at Nellis AFB, NV.

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