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# FEATURE ARTICLES

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## 162<sup>ND</sup> Fighter Wing Tucson International Airport

The Tucson International Airport, located in Tucson, Arizona, is home to the Air National Guard's (ANG) premier F-16 fighter pilot training unit, the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing. It is the largest ANG fighter wing in the country and resides on 92 acres next to the Tucson International Airport. The wing shares use of the runway, security and fire control with the airport. Approximately 1,700 people work at the base. About 1,100 are full-time employees and the balance are drill status Guardsmen providing forces in support of wartime operations.



### Dual Missions

Since its activation in 1956, the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing has fulfilled a federal and state mission. The dual mission, a provision of the United States (U.S.) Constitution, results in each Guardsman holding membership in the National Guard of Arizona and in the National Guard of the U.S. Specifically, the

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wing serves the U.S. and allied nations by providing the finest fighter training programs in the world while partnering with the U.S. Air Force in the Global War on Terror and air sovereignty alert.

### **Federal**

The wing's federal mission is to maintain well-trained, well-equipped units available for prompt mobilization during war and provide assistance during national emergencies (such as natural disasters or civil disturbances). Currently, the 162<sup>nd</sup> deploys its members as part of the Air and Space Expeditionary Force to provide combat forces in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

### **State**

When 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing Guardsmen are not mobilized or under federal control, they report to the governor of Arizona and are led by the adjutant general of the state. Under state law, the wing provides protection of life, property and preserves peace, order and public safety. These missions are accomplished through emergency relief support during natural disasters such as:

- Floods, earthquakes and forest fires
- Search and rescue operations
- Support to civil defense authorities
- Maintenance of vital public services and counterdrug operations

### **Mission Elements**

#### **F-16 Fighter Training**

The 162<sup>nd</sup> is the “face of the United States Air Force (USAF) to the world” providing the best-trained coalition war-fighting partners for the USAF. The wing has trained pilots from 23 of 24 countries that fly the F-16 today while developing strategic partnerships and building strong international relationships based on performance, friendship and trust.

#### **Homeland Defense**

From Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, located in Tucson, Arizona, the wing operates a 24/7, 365-days-per-year alert detachment to provide a rapid reaction force ensuring air sovereignty over the Southwest.

#### **Operation Snowbird**

Also located at Davis-Monthan, this 162<sup>nd</sup> detachment provides support for visiting flying units from around the world looking to train in the optimal weather conditions and ample ranges of Southern Arizona.

#### **Predator, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle**

The 214th Reconnaissance Group located at Davis Monthan flies the MQ-1B Predator over Iraq and Afghanistan via satellite from ground control stations in Tucson. Arizona Air Guardsmen fly 24/7 operations saving American lives through the vital information they provide to troops on the ground.

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## Organization

The wing manages a fleet of more than 70 F-16 C/D/E/F Fighting Falcons. There are three flying squadrons and numerous maintenance squadrons and flights assigned to the wing. Under the 162<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group are the 152<sup>nd</sup>, 195<sup>th</sup>, and 148<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadrons. Supporting these units are the Mission Support Group, the Maintenance Group, the Medical Group and Headquarters Squadron.

## Community

Guardsmen assigned to the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing often serve their entire military careers in Tucson and enjoy close community ties in southern Arizona. Their vital service to country and state is not possible without tremendous support from various civic organizations listed below.

- 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing Minuteman Committee: A non-profit civic group that supports the members and the families of National Guard in Southern Arizona.
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR): Local volunteers working to gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers for members of the National Guard and Reserve.
- Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee: Volunteer business leaders working to maintain and continually improve the relationship between the military and civilian communities.
- Tucson Council for International Visitors: A non-profit group that designs and implements professional programs and provides cultural activities and home hospitality opportunities for foreign leaders, specialists and international scholars.

## The Future

The wing will continue to modernize fighter training operations for the USAF total force and international air forces, defend the homeland, provide trained personnel for the Air and Space Expeditionary Force and fulfill its state mission.

The ultramodern Air Guard Base at Tucson International Airport is very different from the adobe farmhouse and dirt-floor hangar of fifty years ago. What remains unchanged is the outstanding dedication of the men and women working to make the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing one of the finest fighter training wings in the world.

## Wing Facts

- The 162<sup>nd</sup> has more than 37 years experience in fighter training, and more than seventeen years experience in international military training.
- The wing graduated more than 6,800 fighter pilots since 1970.
- Instructor pilots average more than 3,000 fighter hours.
- Aircraft maintainers average eighteen years of experience in fighter aircraft.
- The 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing is one of southern Arizona's largest employers bringing more than \$270 million into the local economy.