

Air Guard units from Massachusetts and New Hampshire come together to defend the homeland and stay razor sharp for deployments.



ON GUARD IN NEW ENGLAND

Photography by Rick Llinares



AIR NATIONAL GUARD units are tasked with being ready to scramble and meet threats in their home sky—or wherever they are sent. Training is a constant. In December, the Massachusetts ANG's 104th Fighter Wing practiced gassing up with New Hampshire's 157th Air Refueling Wing. In April, the 104th FW deployed with a dozen of its F-15s to Europe as part of the latest theater security package sent to deter Russian aggression. The unit will touch down in Iceland, the Netherlands, and other NATO nations during the six-month rotation.

Here, three F-15C Eagles from Barnes Arpt., Mass., train above New York state.





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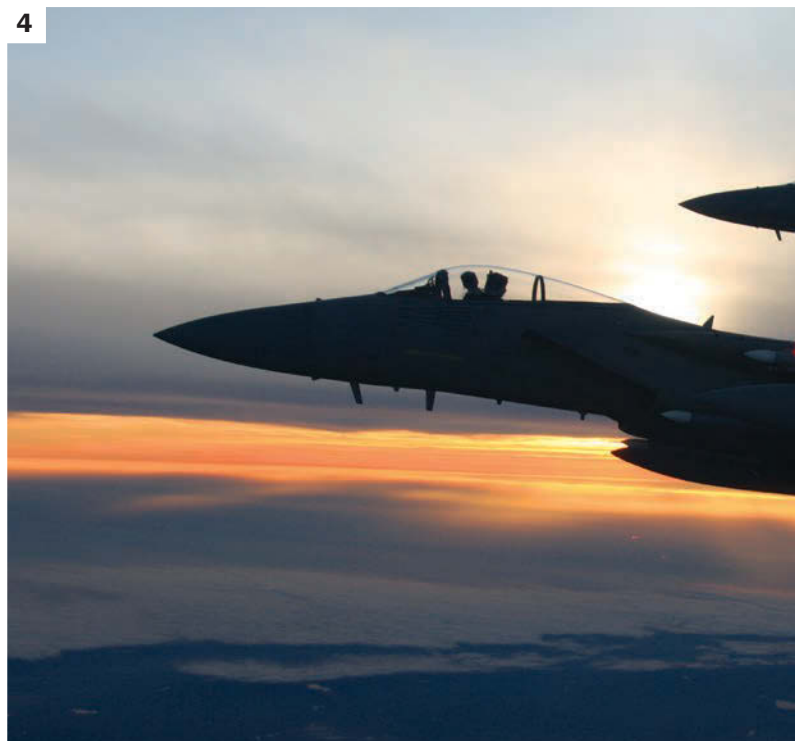
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[1] Maj. Dan Yerrington (left) and TSgt. Jason Mclear prepare an F-15C from the Massachusetts Air National Guard's 104th Fighter Wing for a training sortie in December 2015. The 104th is located some six miles west of Westover Air Reserve Base in western Massachusetts. [2] SSgt. Romeo Colon checks an anti-G suit that helps prevent pooling of blood in the pilot when the aircraft maneuvers at high speed against gravitational forces. [3] Maj. Matt Woodfield drops flares from an F-15C in the skies

above New York. Assigned to Air Combat Command during wartime, the 104th FW is one of the Bay State's oldest flying units. Before receiving F-15 Eagles in 2007, the wing flew A-10s. [4] Yerrington, top, and Maj. Jay Talbert fly in formation. [5] Lt. Col. Sean Halbrook of the 104th FW does a preflight check. One of the 104th's missions is to keep fighters on alert to protect the US Northeast. [6] Fighters rely on tankers to stay in the fight. SMSgt. Andrea Inmon of the 64th Air Refuel-

ing Squadron prepares a refueling boom on a KC-135R. The tanker was on loan from Maine's 101st Air Refueling Wing but flown by the Guard's 157th Air Refueling Wing, based at Pease Intl. Tradeport ANG, N.H. [7] Stratotankers have been the mainstay of the USAF tanker fleet for some 50 years. The 157th has flown a variety of aircraft, including the P-47 Thunderbolt, F-86 Sabre, C-124 Globemaster, and B-26 Marauder.





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|1] SSgt. Jennifer Rodriguez checks a set of night vision goggles. |2] A KC-135's flight crew consists of two pilots, a boom operator, and depending on the mission, a navigator. Maj. Nelson Abreu (left) and Maj. Nicholas Scala handle the controls in the busy cockpit. |3] The aircraft trained over a refueling track in New York. Woodfield gets in position to refuel from a KC-135. |4] Each of the three 104th

FW fighters practiced multiple plugs with the boom in early December. Top to bottom: The F-15s flown by Yerrington, Talbert, and Woodfield. |5] Not all the preparation is done in the air. Maj. John Koegel (left) and MSgt. Abdic Garcia of the 104th FW talk shop. |6] SSgt. Kevin Harzbecker directs a KC-135R on the ramp at Pease.



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[1] Woodfield (foreground) and Talbert break in formation. Woodfield's F-15C shows the AIM-9 Sidewinders and AIM-120 AMRAAMs that are part of its armament. [2] SrA. Connor Brennan of the 157th ARW readies an oxygen mask. [3] Airmen check the Barnes flight line for debris. The western Massachusetts base is one of several sites defending airspace over the northeastern US. [4] Woodfield geared up in

the F-15C cockpit, wearing a 131st Fighter Squadron "Barnestormin' Eagle Driver" morale patch. [5] TSgt. Terrell Fridiger and Inmon perform a preflight check in the belly of a KC-135R. The cargo deck can hold up to 83,000 pounds of cargo and can transport litter and ambulatory patients in aeromedical evacuations. [6] TSgt. Kenneth Fraser (left) and MSgt. Keith Brocato preflight the tanker on the outside. [7] A 104th

FW fighter goes full afterburner after takeoff. The wing was named Air Control Alert Unit of the Year in March. The next month, more than 200 unit members deployed to Europe for Operation Atlantic Resolve. The wing is training alongside NATO allies to strengthen interoperability. Its F-15s are to remain in the theater through September. ✪