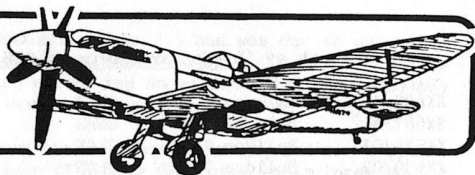


BACKTRACK



FAIRFORDS BUFFS GO TO WAR.

INTRODUCTION

As the build up of allied forces grew against Iraq in the Gulf, the United States Air Force decided to re-open RAF Fairford for the duration of the war in the Gulf theatre.

On the 31st January 1991 The Minister for Defence, The Right Honourable Tom King M.P. announced to Parliament that the Pentagon had asked the British Government for permission to deploy B-52 long range strategic bombers to RAF Fairford in support of 'Desert Storm' operations. He went on to say that the Government had given its permission and therefore the bombers would be arriving at the Gloucestershire base almost immediately.

This historic statement meant that RAF Fairford would once again, in the space of five years, see USAF aircraft taking off from its lengthy runway on combat missions.



Unit badge of the 806 BMW (P) operating from RAF Fairford on 'Desert Storm' missions

PLANS

The 8th Air Force issued a warning order dated 1st February 1991 tasking the 97th Bombardment Wing, Eaker AFB, Arkansas to deploy to RAF Fairford, England. Wing personnel were to form the core of a new provisional bombardment wing with a mission to conduct conventional bombing missions. A total of eight B.52G aircraft were sourced and ferried from Griffiss AFB, New York; Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan; Castle AFB, California and Barksdale AFB, Louisiana to RAF Fairford. Additionally, 26 KC-135, 8 KC-10, 15 C-9 and 2 C-130 plus one Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) L-1011 transported 370 tons of equipment and over 1100 personnel from 20 different bases throughout the CONUS and Europe. This combined force was designated as the 806 BMW (Provisional) on the 5th February 1991.

DEPLOYMENT/BUILD UP

The build up started, unbeknown to many, on the 22nd January when a civilian B.707 call sign 'MAC 15618' and serialled N2134M, and a C-130 call sign 'MAC 15651' landed after dark. (Note - Both aircraft have been reported as being white with no other marking, except for a red cheat line on the B.707). Both aircraft were hangared before daylight and remained so until their departure believed to be for

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the United States, during the early hours of the 3rd February.

Maintenance crews worked hard and long to provide the air crews with high quality air frames and weapons. Munitions began arriving on day two and 2,500 tons of CBU's, Mk-82's, and M-117's were stock piled and ready to go. After much hard work, long hours, superb co-ordination and teamwork, the 806th was ready to fight on the 8th February 1991, only four days after arrival at the station.

B-52 arrivals at Fairford were as follows:-

Tuesday 5th February
76498 c/s 'Glim 51' (416th BW) from Griffiss AFB, New York.
80182 c/s 'Quite 31' (379th BW) from Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
80204 c/s 'Quite 23' (379th BW) from Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
80231 c/s 'Glim 52' (416th BW) from Griffiss AFB, New York.
80245 c/c 'Brew 70' (2nd BW) from Moron, Spain

Wednesday 6th February
80237 c/s 'Glim 53' (93rd BW) from Eaker AFB, Arkansas.
80247 c/s 'Juror33' (379th BW) from Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
92589 c/s 'Juror22' (379th BW) from Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.

Saturday 23rd February
80168 c/s 'Shiva 11' (379th BW) from Moron, Spain

Sunday 24th February
92579 c/s 'Thump 01' (379th BW) from Moron, Spain

MISSIONS

During the morning of Saturday the 9th, a bleak, forlorn, Fairford suddenly sprang to life with maintenance crews buzzing like bees around the snow covered leviathans resting in their lairs. Laden fuel bowsers and bomb trolleys appeared as if from nowhere. We watched and wondered, was this the real thing? The hours ticked by, then, a few seconds past 1400 the first aircraft began to move, followed by three others. These giants, their wings flexing with the weight of bombs slung underneath them, slowly rumbled down the taxiway. After the 'last chance' checks were completed the lead aircraft, 80182, swung onto the runway and without hesitation opened its throttles. With eight engines spewing a mixture of snow and smoke behind it, it gathered speed for what seemed like an eon before finally becoming airborne. The others followed at sixty second intervals, each one seeming to take longer than the last before it finally left the ground. We had just witnessed a small piece of history, as had many others who stopped their cars on roads all around the base, much to the annoyance of the police, who kept trying to move people on.

Daily target tasking was received from CENTAF in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Over the next nineteen days 60 combat sorties were successfully completed for 975.7 hours of total flying time, an average of 16.3 hours per sortie. 806th BMW (P) pilots unloaded 13.2 million pounds of fuel during some 120 hours of air refuelling with KC-135 tankers from the 807th AREFS (P), Monte-de-Marson, France, and the 803rd AREFS (P), Helenikon, Greece. The fuel enabled the crews to deliver over 1,158 tons of munitions on assigned targets. Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) reports and photographs received, graphically portrayed a high degree of success for missions flown by the 806th. Using the concept of Integrated Combat Turns (ICT), the 806th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (CAMS) significantly reduced aircraft turn around times from an average of five and a half hours to a record time of one hour and twenty eight minutes.

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Aircraft participating on daily bombing missions

Saturday 9th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 76498, 80247*, 80245, 80237+.

* Developed undercarriage problems shortly after take off. Spent 3 hours circling between Bentwaters and Linton-on-Ouse to burn off fuel before returning to Fairford.

+ Replaced 80247 on mission.

Sunday 10th February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80231, 80247*, 76498.

* Aborted mission and returned to Fairford.

Monday 11th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 80237, 80245, 76498*.

* Aborted mission and returned to Fairford.

Tuesday 12th February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80231, 92589, 76498.

Wednesday 13th February

Mission aircraft - 80237, 92589, 76498.

Plus two airborne aborts. Thought to be 80204 and 80231

Thursday 14th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 80204, 80245, 80237*.

* Aborted mission and returned to Fairford.

Friday 15th February

Mission aircraft - 80231, 80245, 80237, 76498.

Saturday 16th February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80245, 76498, plus one other

Mission cancelled at last minute as aircraft taxied for take off.

Sunday 17th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 80204*, 76498, 92589.

* Suffered in-flight emergency, dumped bombs into Mediterranean and diverted into Palermo, Sicily. Aircraft returned to Fairford on Tuesday 19th.

Monday 18th February

Mission aircraft - 80231*, 80245, 80237, 76498.

* Diverted to Mildenhall on return due to fog at Fairford. Returned to Fairford on 19th.

Tuesday 19th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 80245, 80237, 92589.

Wednesday 20th February

Mission aircraft - 80182, 80231, 76498, 92589.

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Thursday 21st February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80237, 80245, 92589.

All aircraft landed at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on return flight.

Friday 22nd February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80245, 92589.

No mission launched from Fairford. Instead this mission was launched from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. All aircraft arrived back at Fairford on Saturday 23rd except for 80237 which aborted and finally arrived on Sunday 24th. 80182 departed to Moron, Spain on a positioning flight.

Saturday 23rd February

Mission aircraft - 80168, 76498, 92589 plus two unknown ground aborts.

80168 arrived from Moron, Spain, and was quickly turned round for this mission as was 92589 which had just returned from Jeddah.

Sunday 24th February

Mission aircraft - 80204, 80245, 80247, 76498.

All aircraft diverted into St. Mawgan on return flight due to fog at Fairford. All finally landed at Fairford late afternoon on Monday 25th. 92579 arrived at Fairford from Moron, Spain.

Monday 25th February

Mission aircraft - 80237, 80168, 92579, 92589.

80231 departed back to Barksdale AFB. Interestingly there were no B-52's on the airfield between 1322 and 1747.

Tuesday 26th February

Appointed mission aircraft - 80204, 80247, 76498, 72589.

Mission cancelled

Wednesday 27th February

Mission aircraft - 80237, 80247, 92579*, 92589. This was to be the final mission

* Suffered an airborne abort and landed at an unknown Middle East airfield. 80182 arrived back from Moron.

Friday 1st March

92579 arrived back from the Middle East.

Sunday 3rd March

80231 arrived back from Barksdale.

RECOVERY

B-52 departures were as follows:-

Thursday 28th February

80168 dep c/s 'Doom 69' To Moron, Spain.

Friday 1st March

92589 dep c/s 'Shiva 11' To Barksdale AFB, Louisiana.

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Tuesday 6th March
80204 dep c/s 'Shiva 33' To Barksdale AFB, Louisiana.

Friday 8th March
76498 dep c/s 'Griff 01' To Griffiss AFB, New York.
80231 dep c/s 'Griff 02' To Griffiss AFB, New York.

Saturday 9th March
92579 dep c/s 'Coho 01' To Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
80182 dep c/s 'Coho 02' To Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
80247 dep c/s 'Coho 03' To Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan.
80237 dep c/s 'Jambo 09' To Barksdale AFB, Louisiana
80245 dep c/s 'Jambo 10' To Barksdale AFB, Louisiana

AIRCRAFT HISTORIES/UNIT BADGES

Aircraft marks as on 8th March unless otherwise stated.
* = Figure includes mission launched from Jeddah.

76498 Medium grey/green overall colour scheme. 10 red bombs below and aft of unit shield. Painted out 'GRIFFISS' and Statue of Liberty fin marks. Nose art was 'Ace in the Hole'.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 10. Mission aborts = 1.

80168 Marks as on 25th Feb. No nose art. Probably painted out with normal camo paint. Black palm tree, black camel and 5 black bombs above unit shield plus another 4 below it.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 2. Mission aborts = 0.

80182 'What's Up Doc' nose art. 379 BW shield. 8 red bombs below shield. Aircraft named 'COURAGE'. Triangle 'K' on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 6. Mission aborts = 0.

80204 Marks as on 26th Feb. Nose art 'Specail Delivery'. Triangle 'K' on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 6*. Mission aborts = 2.

80231 'High Roller' nose art. 416 BW shield. 2 red bombs below unit shield. 'GRIFFISS', Statue of Liberty fin marks were painted out between 6th and 24th of February.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 5. Mission aborts = 1.

80237 93rd BW shield with 9 red bombs below. Only five were painted on before mission flown on 25th. Aircraft named 'BLYTHVILLE STORM'. Painted out triangle 'K' on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 9. Mission aborts = 1.

80245 Medium grey/green overall colour scheme. 'Equipoise II' nose art. 2 BW shield with 2 black bombs above and 9 below. Aircraft was named 'DEATH ANGEL'. Also by the name was a star within a black Texas state outline. Fleur de Leys emblem on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 9*. Mission aborts = 0.

80247 Painted out 'High Plains Drifter' nose art. 379 BW shield. Aircraft named 'THE IRAQI ATTACK'. Triangle 'K' on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 2. Mission aborts = 2.

92579 No nose art. 379 BW shield with black camel, black palm tree and 5 black bombs above, plus another 5 black bombs forward of shield.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 1. Mission aborts = 1.

92589 Painted out nose art which was 'Darkest Hour'. 379 BW shield with two red bombs below and to the rear. Aircraft named 'THE WAR BITCH'. Triangle 'K' on fin.
Total successful missions launched from Fairford = 10*. Mission aborts = 0.

These figures give us the sixty successful mission over targets in Kuwait and Iraq. The USAF count the ones launched from Jeddah in this figure. Excluded are the two unsuccessful one which diverted to Palermo and another Middle East airfield.

The colouring for the unit badge at the start of this item is as follows:- The background is brunswick green with a yellow border. 806 BMW PROVISIONAL is burgundy. The B-52's are black and the words DESERT STORM are mid grey. The Fairford station badge is gold with black lettering.



The second badge, shown here opposite, for missions flown from RAF Fairford was coloured as follows :- The background is olive with a black border. DESERT STORM and 1991 are burgundy. The B-52's are black as is the Fairford badge with the exception of the crown upper lining which is burgundy.

CONCLUSION

Overall the 806th BMW (P) accomplished the staggering task of moving 1157 people and 370 tons of equipment into a base in caretaker status and then rapidly moulding personnel and material into a cohesive, well disciplined and highly effective combat unit. These actions directly contributed to the swift conclusion of the Iraqi campaign. The base returned to caretaker status after the final aircraft departed for the USA just after 10 am on the 22nd March 1991. This final honour going to KC-135Q 00345 of the 380th BW.

My thanks to the US Air Force, RAF Fairford, Alan, Barry, David, Graham, Phil and all those who contributed any item however small. If it wasn't for you this item would not have been possible. If anyone can add further to this report I would be only to happy to hear from them.

ADVERTS

If any member would like to use this magazine for free personal adverts would they please write them clearly and send them to the Secretary who will then include them in the magazine as and when space allows.

LIFTS TO AIRSHOWS ETC.

Once again if anyone has difficulty in getting lifts to airshows please contact the Secretary. Provided you are prepared to share petrol costs he may well be able to fix you up.