

The Jazz

The Louisiana Air National Guard keeps on trucking in the land of gators, jambalaya, and all that jazz.

Photography by Ted Carlson



Eagles



F-15 pilots of LANG's 159th Fighter Wing train over familiar terrain—Mississippi Delta swampland. These New Orleans-based fighters sport the tail code JZ, thus paying tribute to America's distinctive musical form and the city where it was born.

[1] LANG personnel scramble to their F-15s at the alert facility at Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, La. **[2]** F-15A fighter departs on a training mission. **[3]** First Lt. Quintin Lebkowski, an F-15 pilot, mans his jet aircraft at the base.



[4] F-15 soars over Louisiana, with another Eagle and two F-16s in trail. **[5]** TSgt. Anton Blouin (l) and SSgt. Wayne Bush work on one of the 159th's F-15 fighters. **[6]** F-15C (rear) and F-15A taxi to position on the New Orleans runway.



[1] The city of New Orleans rolls out below these four Eagles of the 122nd Fighter Squadron. **[2]** LANG fighter displays the wing's favored nickname—"Bayou Militia"—along with the famous JZ marking. **[3]** Maj. John Manix checks six.



[4] F-15C goes vertical over the Gulf of Mexico, accompanied by an F-16 of the 56th Fighter Wing, Luke AFB, Ariz. **[5]** F-15C and F-16 meet at the merge in overwater training.

[1] Lt. Col. Jim Bong sits at the controls of his F-15A. (Yes, he's related—being the great nephew of Maj. Richard Bong, Medal of Honor awardee and all-time top Air Force ace.) **[2]** Swampland stretches out for miles below an Eagle. **[3]** With the Crescent City in the background, this Jazz Eagle gets airborne.



[4] A crew chief prepares this LANG F-15C for a mission at the alert facility. **[5]** This F-15 gets out of Dodge in a hurry. **[6]** SrA. Eric Hall guards an F-15 inside an alert facility shelter.



[1] Four Jazz Eagles form up for a pass over their New Orleans base. [2] Lt. Col. Jim Bong prepares for another training mission.



[3] F-15C and F-16 break away from each other in recent combat training. [4] Patch of the 159th Fighter Wing bears a fleur-de-lis, befitting Louisiana's French heritage. [5] The wing's 122nd Fighter Squadron, part of the "Bayou Militia," also sports the stylized iris flower, long associated with the French monarchy.

[1] F-15C pilots on training missions become only too familiar with the unique, nearly submerged terrain of south Louisiana, as seen in this photo. **[2]** First Lt. Lance Bowlin of the 122nd FS shows off his night vision goggles before a night-training sortie. **[3]** Bayou Militia airmen (l-r) SSgt. Brandon Koenig, TSgt. Antonio Gongora, and TSgt. Eric Lemoine—all of the 159th FW—load a live AIM-9X Sidewinder missile in the alert barn.



[4] The ramp at the 159th FW filled up with tents, awnings, and buses in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which hit New Orleans in late August 2005. **[5]** Four Jazz Eagles form up.

Louisiana ANG photo

[1] New Orleans, submerged and reeling from Katrina's blow. **[2]** F-15C screams upward over the Gulf of Mexico. **[3]** F-15C makes a striking silhouette when that evening sun goes down.

Louisiana ANG photo



[4] F-15C, piloted by Maj. Kris Murphy, pulls out of the alert facility as a crew member sends it on its way. **[5]** For F-15C driver 1st Lt. Lance Bowlin, the flight comes to an end. ■