

# Power Players



# at Kadena

**The air base on Okinawa is a centerpiece of USAF power projection.**

Photography by Jim Haseltine



*A four-ship formation of F-15C Eagles of the 67th Fighter Squadron, Kadena AB, Japan, patrols off the island of Okinawa.*

**K**adena AB, Japan, is one of the key bases in the Pacific. A sprawling facility on the island of Okinawa, it hosts fighters, tankers, special operations, intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance aircraft, and rescue units. Closer to Taiwan than Tokyo, Kadena plays an essential role in the defense of Japan as well as the US. US Army Patriot missile batteries help defend the base from missile attack.

**[1]** An HH-60G Pave Hawk of the 33rd Rescue Squadron flies along the Okinawan coast en route to the base. **[2]** A pararescueman is hoisted aboard a Pave Hawk with a litter. **[3]** KC-135s are arrayed in one corner of the large apron and hangar area. These belong to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron.



**[4]** RC-135s of the 82nd Reconnaissance Squadron provide signals intelligence and other ISR of the Pacific rim. Working on an RC-135 engine are SSgt. Mario Adinolfi, SSgt. David Heaps, SrA. Matthew Gouldsmith, and TSgt. John Henze.





**[1]** Flying the 67th Fighter Squadron's flagship, Capt. Thomas Hunt dumps flares on a training mission. The flares would distract an adversary's heat-seeking missiles in a real engagement. **[2]** Two F-22s from the 94th FS, Langley AFB, Va., visit Kadena skies. Kadena has hosted F-22s on several occasions in the

last few years; regular deployments of Raptors to the base are expected, given Kadena's proximity to North Korea and other Asia-Pacific hotspots. **[3]** The two Raptors perform an engagement. Although the F-22 is the world's "Top Gun" in air combat, Kadena's F-15s are USAF's best Eagles, with new radars and

helmet-aimed missiles. When the F-22s are not visiting, the F-15s can handle most regional threats. **[4]** An F-15C pilot gets an airman's salute, telling him he's good to go before a mission. **[5]** SrA. Shera Hendrickson and A1C Shawn Bailey hook up an F-15's launch rail to a test rig.

**[1]** Pararescuemen from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron head out to a water training exercise south of Okinawa. **[2]** An F-15 pilot sports the Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System, or JHMCS. It allows the F-15 pilot to aim a heat-seeking missile by looking at the target, without the need to point his aircraft directly at it. **[3]** A Pave Hawk gets ready to dust off on a mission. **[4]** Idesuna Jima, an island on the gunnery range, where Pave Hawk crews can practice live-firing with their .50-caliber guns. **[5]** An F-15 and an F-22 adjacent to three of Kadena's hardened aircraft shelters. The shelters could protect some aircraft in a ballistic missile attack. **[6]** A1C Jimmie Tillman, an F-15 crew chief, services his aircraft.





**[1]** TSgt. Scott Lagerveld wields his .50-caliber machine gun from the door of a Pave Hawk. The firepower comes in handy if an airman must be rescued behind enemy lines. **[2]** A brace of F-15s, wearing Kadena's distinctive ZZ tail code, break for

a dogfight turn. **[3]** The extremely agile AIM-9X missile is the newest weapon in the F-15C's arsenal, making a potent combination with the Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System. Here, a training round is mounted on a rail by SSgt. Michael

Clark, A1C Amanda Zahn, and A1C James Bozley. **[4]** An F-22 from the 1st Fighter Wing at Langley taxis out in the Kadena sunshine. Raptors have not experienced any problems operating in the base's salty, hot, and humid environment.

**[1]** A1C Emily Miles performs a postflight systems check in the F-15's cockpit. **[2]** Two pararescuemen come aboard a Pave Hawk during a water exercise. They made multiple jumps from the chopper into the water. **[3]** F-15s in the military operating area near Okinawa. Kadena F-15s will frequently practice with Japan Air Self-Defense Force F-15s from a nearby base, or with US F/A-18s visiting from Iwakuni, Japan. **[4]** Two Langley Raptors flank a Kadena Eagle in a joint exercise. **[5]** An F-22 stops for an end-of-runway check. The all-moving horizontal stabilizer is evident in this photo.





**[1]** Capt. Matt Evers of the 67th FS flies fingertip formation with another F-15. The JHMCS adds greater situational awareness to the F-15's already magnificent cockpit view. **[2]** An Atlas Air 747—part of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet—stops at Kadena during a resupply mission. CRAF augments Air Mobility Command's fleet of transports. **[3]** Two Eagles touch down at the end of a mission. **[4]** An E-3 Sentry AWACS of the 961st Airborne Air Control Squadron in a Kadena revetment. A crucial "lily pad" with room for literally hundreds of aircraft, Kadena promises to be a critical asset for years to come as a major USAF base in the western Pacific. ■