

Hogs of a Higher Order

Once, the Idaho ANG's A-10s were blunt instruments. Now they are exceedingly precise ones.

Photography by Jim Haseltine



Order



Two C-model A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, modified with high-tech precision engagement equipment, head out over the rugged Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho. The Warthogs belong to the 190th Fighter Squadron, a Boise-based outfit making the transition from heavy air assault to pinpoint attack.

The A-10C has been called “best friend to the boots on the ground.” The reason is clear: Its precision engagement technology allows this heavy hitting close air support aircraft to also use a variety of laser and satellite guided weapons, in addition to its legendary 30 mm cannon, threatening more high-value targets with less risk to Blue Forces. In recent months, the Idaho Air National Guard’s 190th Fighter Squadron made the shift from A-10A to C models. [1] Two A-10s skirt the rocky peaks of the Sawtooth range—suggestive, to some, of terrain in Afghanistan.



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[2] A pair of Cs head off on a training mission. [3] A heavily loaded A-10 will pack an outside punch, when it must. [4] Lt. Col. Anthony Brown looks over the log books prior to the preflight walk around of his aircraft.



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[1] Maj. Kyle Carpenter preflights his aircraft. The C model marks a significant upgrade in sophistication. Some new features seen here include a new cockpit layout with color multi-function displays, up-front controller, and head-up display. Others are digital stores management, Litening and Sniper advanced targeting pods, and variable message format. **[2]** A pilot rolls in and pulls the trigger of

the A-10's GAU-8/A seven-barrel Gatling gun, a system capable of firing 3,900 30 mm rounds per minute. **[3]** A Warthog pilot releases an inert GBU-12 laser guided training bomb on a training sortie. **[4]** This A-10 unloads a pair of BDU-50 high-drag weapons, with "ballutes," at low altitude. **[5]** Two A-10Cs head toward Saylor Creek Bombing Range near Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.

[1] An A-10 pilot lines up on a target while talking to ground controllers on the range. He is tracking his target through the Litening-Advanced Targeting pod on the outside pylon of the right wing. **[2]** A pilot orbits the range after releasing one of his inert GBU-12 LGBs, which raises some dust far below. **[3]** During the transition to the A-10C model, the 190th FS has been conducting work up exercises and weapons release tests to bring the unit to top form. **[4]** After entering the Saylor Creek range complex, one part of a two-ship peels away to prepare for weapon releases. **[5]** A four-ship of A-10s join a Utah ANG KC-135R tanker over southern Idaho. **[6]** A pilot conducts a "ripple two" release of inert GBU-12 LGBs.





[1] During a CAS training sortie, a pilot banks his Warthog toward the target. **[2]** Done flying, two 190th FS pilots walk back to the squadron for debrief. **[3]** One of a pair of A-10s sits in the precontact position while preparing to refuel from a KC-135. **[4]** A 173rd Fighter Wing

F-15 from the Oregon Air National Guard leads a three-ship formation with two A-10Cs over mountainous central Idaho. The A-10 was already a rugged and fearsome performer, and the A-10C upgrades ensure the Hogs will remain effective fighters for years to come. ■