

## Life at the boneyard

*Defense-Update*



*The Air Force command said the elimination of 18 A-10s from the current force will not impact planned A-10 deployments through the end of fiscal year 2018. Converting aircraft to BAI status will free up experienced maintainers so they can be integrated into the F-35 Lightning II program.*

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (D-M) is known mainly for its role as the boneyard for combat and civil aircraft that reach the end of their service life. New arrivals expected here soon are 18 A-10 Thunderbolt II close air support aircraft, to be removed from active units and placed here in 'Backup-Aircraft Inventory' (BAI) status with the possibility to convert another 18 at a later date in fiscal year 2015. The A-10s will join thousands of other aircraft parked here, slowly disintegrating into scrap under the desert sun.

But for some there is resurrection. One of the lucky ones was B-52 Stratofortress called 'Ghost Rider' took to the sky after spending seven years in the boneyard. Tail number 61-1007 'Ghost Rider' was not the average 'guest' at D-M. It was maintained at 1000-type storage, which is the most preserved level of aircraft storage. In late 2014, seven years after arriving at D-M, this bomber was chosen to rejoin the Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC).

"It was chosen after thorough inspections and extensive engineering analysis," said Capt. Chuck McLeod, the B-52 System Project Office team lead. Although well preserved, the blazing hot Arizona sun took its toll on the dormant aircraft bleaching sections of its exposed aluminum skin almost white, and causing the tires and major fuel lines to dry rot.



*A P-47 Thunderbolt, two P-51 Mustangs and F-16 Fighting Falcon fly in formation during the 2015 Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., Feb. 28, 2015. USAF photo by Chris Massey*



*A B-52H Stratofortress takes off after being taken out of long term storage Feb. 13, 2015, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. The aircraft was decommissioned in 2008 and has spent the last seven years sitting in the “Boneyard,” but was selected to be returned to active status and will eventually rejoin the B-52 fleet. The B-52 was flown by the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group. (USAF photo by Master Sgt. Greg Steele)*

Through the return to flight process technicians at the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group replaced fuel bladders and lines were replaced, and by the end of January the crew successfully ran of all eight engines.

“I’ve been flying the B-52s since the 80s and it surprised me that after almost seven years... she cranked up just fine and we had no issues with the flight control systems.”said the pilot Col. Keith Schultz, 307th Operations Group commander and the most experienced B-52 pilot still flying in the Air Force.



*The "Ghost Rider" is prepared for an early morning taxi test on Feb. 12, 2015, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. The B-52H Stratofortress was decommissioned in 2008 and has been sitting in the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group's "Boneyard," but is being restored to join the active fleet of B-52s. (USAF photo by Master Sgt. Greg Steele)*



*An aerial shot taken by Glenn Watson of Mach Point One Aviation Photography during the Heritage Flight Certification Course over Davis Monthan Photo: Glenn Watson*



*Two F-86 Sabres and an F-22 Raptor fly in formation during the 2015 Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., Feb. 27, 2015. (USAF photo by Chris Massey)*

Another recent celebration at D-M was the Heritage Flight Training Certification Course (HFTCC), held Feb. 27 – March 1. HFTCC provided an opportunity to see WWII, Korea and Vietnam veteran planes flying with the latest air force jets. This annual aerial demonstration training event has been held at D-M since 2001, providing civilian and military pilots the opportunity to practice flying in formation for the upcoming air show season.

The aircraft that participated in this year's HFTCC were the historic P-51 Mustang, P-40 Warhawk, P-38 Lightning, P-47 Thunderbolt and the F-86 Sabre. Air Combat Command aircraft included the F-22 Raptor and the F-16 Fighting Falcon. Established in 1997, the HFTCC features aerial demonstrations from historical and modern fighter aircraft which will fly in formation together during air shows across the country.



*Sitting in a wheelchair with images of airplanes on his shirt and a U.S. Army Air Corps hat on his head, 92-year-old retired Air National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Hertel was reunited with the P-47 Thunderbolt during the Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course here Feb. 28. Hertel flew the legendary Thunderbolt while stationed on Iwo Jima, Japan, during World War II. He had not seen the aircraft since retiring from the military in the 1960's. The log book presented to him showed Hertel's flights over Iwo Jima, during World War II. The P-47 pilots ended WWII with 3,752 air-to-air kills while flying more than 423,000 sorties. (Photo: USAF by Senior Airman Jensen Stidham)*