



lated just over 4,000 hours, but in 2005 and 2006 the unit will fly about 4,800 hours. However, the Air Staff has had to back up this increase financially, with an additional \$1.37 million for fiscal year '06 and the same amount for '07. Part of that extra funding has already been allocated by hiring an additional 21 people.

PAA increase

With this increase in training capacity requirement in mind, an increase in airframes is imminent. Currently there are 21 airframes, of which 15 are funded as Primary Assigned Aircraft (PAA). The difference is used as a back-up inventory. The plan is to relinquish six B-models to the boneyard (AMARC), replacing them with an equivalent number of D-models. Furthermore, six additional C-models are expected to arrive, which will be mothballed and held in non-flying reserve until the required funding for the extra manpower is guaranteed. Upon completion of this process, the wing will have reached a 27-aircraft inventory, composed of C and D-models only, of which 24 will be funded to be Primary Assigned Aircraft (PAA).

The expectation is that, in fiscal year '08, somewhere between 200 and 250 additional people, ranging from instructor pilots, maintainers and administrative staff, to firemen and people working in the medical clinic, will have joined the wing as part of the projected increase in capacity.

Apart from this increase in personnel and aircraft, the base itself requires little modification. In 1996, the wing had a Site Activation Task Force (SATAF) visit, in which the National Guard Bureau came to look at the infrastructure of the base. It concluded that the unit has sufficient square footage and facilities to accommodate a 24 Primary Assigned Aircraft unit and do its mission. At Kingsley Field there is more than sufficient ground and air space, and only minor modifications have to be made to the base. Some investment is required to build a good wash rack to wash the planes, as in the winter the aircraft are washed in the fuel barn – less than ideal as aircraft may be inside that are having a fuel problem fixed.

On average, instructor pilots at Kingsley Field have approximately 2,500 flying hours under their belts, which is almost twice as much as those teaching at Tyndall. The reason is that the instruc-

A shark-mouthed F-15 lifts off from Kingsley Field. The early part of the B-course FS syllabus is a straightforward type conversion to the F-15, beginning with three sorties in the F-15D two-seater.

tors at Kingsley Field are Guard pilots, having accumulated more hours while serving in their operational F-15 air defence units run by the Air National Guard.

Even this expertise cannot prevent around 10 percent of the students failing to reach graduation. Those who drop out do keep their wings, though, and are offered a waiver to fly a crew airplane like a tanker or transport aircraft.

Those Oregonians finishing the course in most cases serve with the 142nd at Portland, where besides undertaking homeland defence missions they continue to do their upgrade training to become a flight lead, and then an instructor pilot in two years if all goes well. For a duration of three to four years, the pilots build their hours and experience at a front-line unit, after which they have the opportunity to return to the unit that originally hired them. This principle is called Farming Out and in many cases these pilots go back to Kingsley Field to become instructor pilots.

The 173rd is in the fortunate position to practice Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT) on a very regular basis with the air wings operating out of Mountain Home, Hill, Fresno and Great Falls, all within flying distance. When the training syllabus requires a 'Blue air' sortie that could use dissimilar assets, the unit does so to the maximum extent possible, and Mountain Home is a very regular contributor. The 173rd then returns the favour later when asked to provide 'Red air' to the other unit. This swapping of 'Red air' is a great training experience and also enhances safety. When a group of the exact same aircraft is visually fighting each other it is very difficult to distinguish 'Blue' from 'Red'.

79-0079 returns to Kingsley Field with a characteristic puff of rubber smoke. The aircraft is called 'Enger to Fly', its nose art depicting a cartoon beaver. The F-15 is a big step-up for new 'pup' students, whose fast-jet experience is mostly limited to the T-38. Nevertheless, the F-15 is considered an easy aircraft to land.

