



Photo by Staff Sgt. James M. Faso II, 174th Fighter Wing



New York ANG bids F-16s goodbye

174th Fighter Wing holds ceremony to retire last manned fighters.

By Capt. Anthony L. Bucci | 174th Fighter Wing, Public Affairs

TWO thousand Airmen, family members and friends bid farewell to the last two F-16s operated by the New York Air National Guard's 174th Fighter Wing at Hancock Field ANGB on March 6, marking the wing's transition to MQ-9 Reaper operations.

The 174th's Wing Commander, Col. Kevin Bradley, and his wingman Lt. Col. Dan Tester took off on the final flight that ended 63-years of fighter operations at the base in Syracuse, New York.

Tester was the first to take off, followed moments later by Bradley. They made three passes over the facility, including a pass over the assembled group, which had spilled onto the ramp area outside the hangar.

Brig. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York, reminded the Airmen and their families that the event was a celebration of the 174th's future.

"Today should not be a moment of sadness as I have spoken

to Air Force and Air National Guard Leaders about the dwindling piloted aircraft. Thanks to your leadership this unit is one of the most, if not the most, current unit in the Air National Guard with these Un-

manned Aerial Vehicles," Murphy said.

"The F-16 has been an outstanding aircraft for the unit, but it is just a machine," Bradley said. "It has been the airmen of the 174th Fighter Wing that has made up this mission since 1988 and will continue to do so into the future."

After Bradley and Tester completed their final pass overhead they headed north to the 174th Forward Operating Location on Wheeler-Sack Army Air Field located at Ft. Drum.

The airspace over Fort Drum has served as the training space for the 174th for many years as well as other aircraft from all over the Northeast. It will continue to be utilized by other units for their training requirements as well as the unit's new MQ-9 mission in the future.

When Bradley and Tester landed they were greeted by family, friends and unit members who congratulated them on their final flight, as well as their part in the end of an era.

The 174FW has been flying the F-16 Fighting Falcon since 1988, amassing more than 70,000 flying hours.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Ricky Best, 174th Fighter Wing

Top: Airmen of the New York Air National Guard's 174th Fighter Wing salute as Col Kevin Bradley, the Wing Commander, leaves on his final flight in an F-16C from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base. Left: New York Air National Guard Col. Tony Basile, a former commander of the 174th Fighter Wing and Lt. Col. Daniel Tester celebrate the final flight of the 174th Fighter Wing's Commander, Col. Kevin W. Bradley following the last flight of F-16s. Bradley was doused with champagne, an Air Force tradition signifying a final flight.