

# HAWGSMOKE 2018

TEXT - IVAN VOUKADINOV

PHOTOS - IVAN VOUKADINOV, & 4AVIATION - STEFAN GOOSSENS & MICHEL VAN DE MHEEN

Between October 17-20 the 2018 edition of Hawgsmoke took place at Whiteman AFB in Missouri, hosted by the resident 442nd Fighter Wing. Ivan Voukadinov reports from Whiteman AFB.



*A pair of "Tank killers" on their way to their mark.*

*Photo by Ivan Voukadinov*

## Hawgsmoke 2018

Between October 17-20 the 2018 edition of Hawgsmoke took place at Whiteman AFB in Missouri, hosted by the resident 442nd Fighter Wing. Since the first Hawgsmoke competition was held in 2000, this is now the 9th time that A-10 squadrons have gone head to head to find out who is the best at mastering the Warthog.

The roots of Hawgsmoke go back to the "Gunsmoke" competition which was held by the USAF at Nellis AFB between 1949 and 1995. Gunsmoke was an air-to-ground gunnery and bombing competition which involved many different types of aircraft. In 2000, it was reincarnated by Col. Cliff Latta as Hawgsmoke, except now it was specific only to the A-10.

The first edition was held at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) in Michigan and hosted by the 172nd Fighter Squadron. Since then it is held every two years. The various critical skills that all Hawg drivers train for and use in combat are put to the test, which includes mission planning, bombing, strafing, and use of guided missiles. It is also a very good opportunity, if not the only one, for pilots and maintainers from all A-10 squadrons to come together as a community and exchange experience while enhancing camaraderie.

The event began on October 17 with the arrival of all the participants. Each squadron sent 4-5 jets and its best pilots to Whiteman AFB, arriving in formation and landing at a specified time which they had previously committed to. The squadrons were actually scored even upon arrival, based on how close to their specified arrival time they landed.











## Twelve squadrons

The rules of Hawgsmoke state that the winner of the previous event must host the next event. In 2016, it was the 47th Fighter Squadron from Davis-Monthan AFB which won. However, the rules also state that a squadron cannot host more than twice in a row. Since the 47th FS had hosted in 2016 and 2014, the responsibility was passed on to the runner-up, which was the 303rd Fighter Squadron of the 442nd Fighter Wing.

A total of 12 squadrons made the trip to Whiteman AFB for the event. This included:

- **47th Fighter Squadron "Termites"**  
Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona
- **74th Fighter Squadron "Flying Tigers"**  
Moody AFB, Georgia
- **75th Fighter Squadron "Tiger Sharks"**  
Moody AFB, Georgia
- **76th Fighter Squadron "Vanguard"**  
Moody AFB, Georgia
- **104th Fighter Squadron "Ravens"**  
Warfield ANGB, Maryland
- **107th Fighter Squadron "Red Devils"**  
Selfridge ANGB, Michigan
- **163rd Fighter Squadron "Blacksnakes"**  
Ft. Wayne ANGB, Indiana
- **190th Fighter Squadron "Skullbangers"**  
Gowen Field ANGB, Idaho
- **303rd Fighter Squadron "KC Hawgs"**  
Whiteman AFB, Missouri
- **354th Fighter Squadron "Bulldogs"**  
Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona
- **357th Fighter Squadron "Dragons"**  
Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona
- **358th Fighter Squadron "Lobos"**  
Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona

Notably missing was the 25th Fighter Squadron from Osan, in South Korea which couldn't make the trip. Also missing were the A-10s of the 66th Weapons Squadron from Nellis AFB. Although most of the squadrons flew in with their own aircraft, the 74th used the aircraft brought by the 75th FS, the 76th FS used the 303rd FS jets, while the 357th FS flew on the 354th FS aircraft. A total of over 40 A-10s arrived in Whiteman from all around the USA.





## The opening ceremony

Traditionally, every Hawgsmoke opens with the arrival of the squadrons followed by an opening ceremony. After the opening statements, the servicemen and pilots from all the squadrons gather together to pay respect and remember the A-10 pilots who have been lost during the years in a “Fallen Hawg” ceremony. This is initiated by a 4-ship of A-10s which performs a missing man formation.

The names of all the A-10 pilots who have been lost are then read aloud as the rest of the pilots take a shot of whiskey and shatter them into a fire pit. This year, an A-10 tactical demonstration was also flown above Whiteman AFB. As the pilots and maintenance personnel prepared for the next day's shooting, the 442nd Fighter Wing had also prepared the Cannon Range in Fort Leonard in anticipation. The three main “disciplines” were bombing, strafing and missile shooting.

The range day was split up into time blocks, with one for every team. Each squadron flew a formation of 4 A-10s to bomb and shoot. As they approached the range, the first task was to destroy a simulated truck convoy with AGM-65 “Maverick” missiles. In fact, real missiles were not used and instead the inert training version known as the CATM-65 was used in conjunction with the AN/AAQ-28 LITENING targeting pod.

Simulated launches were performed with both the infrared and electro-optical versions of the Maverick and scoring was based on imagery from the CATM-65 which shows the simulated “kill” and the time. The highest score was awarded to the team which managed to destroy all the simulated targets in the shortest amount of time.

Next up was the bombing which consisted of three main profiles, and two runs of each for a total of 6 bombing runs. The three profiles were the 30-degree angle dive bomb, the 20-degree low angle low drag bomb, and the 15-degree low angle high drag pop.

Each of these has their own unique restrictions on approach angles and minimum release altitude. For example, the 30-degree dive bomb requires the pilots to release no lower than 4,500 feet.

## The competition

The 15-degree “drag pop” requires the pilots to perform a “pop-up” maneuver as they approach the target and then initiate a bombing run at 15 degree dive with release no lower than 75 feet of altitude, although none of the pilots came even close to being that low. Hits were calculated using imagery from different cameras as well as range telemetry data.

The target being an old Army truck, was bombed with 25 lb. BDU-33 practice bombs filled with white phosphorus to mark their hits. Scoring was similar to a game of golf, with the lowest score being the winner. If a bomb made a direct hit, it was counted as zero points. The further away from the target it hit radially, the more points were awarded. The team with the lowest score won this part.

Last, was the most impressive part, which of course was the shooting competition with the GAU-8 Avenger Gatling cannon, unique only to the A-10. Each pilot had 100 practice rounds to work with during their strafing runs. The first half was the long range strafe, which required pilots to shoot from no closer than 2,000 feet.

Each pilot was required to hit the target with at least 10 rounds before being able to shoot from a closer short-range distance. The goal then was obviously to put as many rounds as possible into the target. Measuring the accuracy was done acoustically, using a system of microphones located at different points around the target. Each microphone measures the sound intensity, which corresponds to how far away from it the round landed. The microphone readings are then triangulated to calculate the exact location of the hit. These are then combined to get the score.







## The winners

The following day, all the scores were tallied up and calculated with the winners announced the day after on October 20th. The results were:

- 30 High Angle Dive Bomb - Maj Aaron "Boomhaur" Bohn 76th FS
- 20 Low Angle Low Drag - Maj Ryan "Slinga" Yuengling 104th FS
- 15 Low Angle High Drag Pop - LTC Bart "Shrek" Ward 107th FS
- Strafe - Sky "Comet" Lesh 354th FS (Demo Team)
- Overall Pilot - LTC Bart "Shrek" Ward
- Overall 3rd Place Team - 358th FS "Lobos"
- Overall 2nd Place Team - 354th FS "Bulldogs"
- Top Tactical Team - 74th FS "Flying Tigers"
- Top Bombing Team - 74th FS "Flying Tigers"
- **Overall 1st Place Team - 74th FS "Flying Tigers"**

What's even more impressive is that the winners, the 74th FS, had recently completed a deployment just before Hawgsmoke, with little time to prepare for the competition. This was the first Hawgsmoke win for the 74th FS. Other units, such as the 107th FS had also recently come back from deployment.

Given these results, it is clear where to go see Hawgsmoke in 2020, as the hosts will now be the 74th FS at Moody AFB in Georgia. Capt. Randall Ott, a pilot with the 74th FS summed up what it means to the squadron:

*"We can always improve, we're always working hard to be the best pilots and close-air support team we can regardless of the event. Whether it is working with joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) here at Moody, Red Flag integrating with a massive air picture, or Hawgsmoke, we are always learning and improving."*

*"Continuing to push ourselves home station and TDY will help us defend our title [at Moody] in 2020 and, more importantly, help protect our brothers and sisters on the ground in combat."*

