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Maj. Paul "Gruve" Gruver

Interview

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This is an interview with a Viper driver of the Fresno Air National Guard, CA.

F-16.net: *Gruve, how long have you been flying the Viper?*

Maj. Gruver: I'm flying the F-16 since January 1985.

F-16.net: *What is your number of flying hours in the Viper?*

Maj. Gruver: Untill now I have accumulated about 3100 total military hours and 1700 in the Viper.

F-16.net: *What is your sweetest memory about your assignment in Europe or your tour at the 10TFS Hahn AB?*

Maj. Gruver: Flying memories: probably the deployments to places in the Middle East and flying absolutely incredible missions with my pals and our allies in the region. Personal memories: Sitting on my deck in Traben Trarbach, drinking some Mosel wine, and watching the riverboats go by.

F-16.net: *What impression did you have while in Europe what the mission of Hahn's wing was, did the other wings (Ramstein, Spang etc) all have the same?*

Maj. Gruver: We all had air-to-air missions, conventional air-to-ground missions, and other missions as well.

F-16.net: *Gruve, you are now in the Air National Guard. Why did it become relevant for you to leave the active duty and what would you say are differences/advantages/disadvantages in the guard rather than in the USAF?*

Maj. Gruver: I left the USAF to have a better quality of life (time with the family, stability of living location, and choice over my future), and also to make a lot more money than possible in the Air Force. The Guard is every bit as tactically oriented as the USAF, and in many ways, our ability to accomplish the mission is superior to our active duty counterparts, simply because our guys average more than twice the fighter time as our active duty counterparts. Plus, once we hire guys, they stick around the same squadron for twenty years and you get used to flying with all your pals. This is different in the USAF where you replace one third of your squadron every year.

F-16.net: *Could you tell us a little about your guard unit so that our readers know more about it?*

Maj. Gruver: I'm in the 194th Fighter Squadron in Fresno, California. Except for a few years in the F-4, we've been flying single seat fighters since our inception as a flying unit. Among others, we've flown the P-51, and F-84, the F-86, F-102, F-106, F-4, the F-16A, and the F-16C. Our mission has traditionally been the defense of the United States, but has recently been significantly expanded to include worldwide deployability, as well as counterdrug activities.

F-16.net: *What was the worst practical joke ever played on you at Friday nights at the squadron bar?*

Maj. Gruver: I don't really recall any spectacular jokes played on me, but perhaps that's just selective memory!

F-16.net: *You have basically two callsigns... what story is behind each (Gruve /Jammer)? We have folks out there who like to hear the stories behind all this?*

Maj. Gruver: Gruve is just the shortened version of my last name. No story, really. Jammer came from a huge mission I flew when I was a new flight lead, as part of a enormous strike package against the United Kingdom. My wingman and I were to be the bait that draw the RAF up; when they launched, my wingman and I were to leave, and then the continent-based fighters would supposedly engage the RAF with superior numbers. Only it didn't work out that way. AWACS failed to warn my two-ship that the RAF had launched, and suddenly we were attacked by dozens of RAF fighters. Needless to say, in the heat of battle, my wingman and I did a lot of talking on the frequency shared by dozens of other unengaged fighters. Some people say we talked way too much, which is probably true. Nevertheless, the name "Jammer" stuck as a result of filling up the frequency.

F-16.net: *What was your favorite squadron and why?*

Maj. Gruver: Active duty: clearly the 10th TFS, just because of the tight relationship we all had, and the intensity of the daily operation. Guard: there is only one: the 194th, because it's a great outfit, run by visionary people, with a great mission and fabulous airplane.

F-16.net: *What was your favorite Viper (tailnumber)*

Maj. Gruver: F-16C [#84-1318](#) (my current tail at Fresno).

F-16.net: *How many other jets did you fly and how do they differ compared to the Viper, or what can you say about the different models of the Viper itself?*

Maj. Gruver: T-38A Talon: fun for a while, kind of maneuverable, but nothing compared to the Viper. F-16A: very maneuverable, with a decent radar. After it was equipped with the Aim-7 Sparrow radar missile, it was a decent fighter. F-16C: Vastly improved avionics and radar missile mechanization. Not quite as maneuverable as the A-model, but you have better stuff in the nose of the jet.

F-16.net: *Any good advice for our younger readers who want to fly the Viper as well one day?*

Maj. Gruver: Study, study, study! Especially math, science, physics. Flying lessons are OK, but anyone who wants to fly military jets has to be selected first, and that's going to depend largely on how well the student does in school.

F-16.net: *Thank you!*

Maj. Gruver: See ya. Gruve

- Maj. Gruver was interviewed online by Martin Agüera -