



Captain Randall "Hacker"Haskin was one of the artists that painted much of the artwork that adorned the jets of the 336th FS during their OIF deployment. His thoughts are below...

The 336" FS Rocketeers deployed in January 2003 for Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, although we suspected we were also part of the buildup for an anticipated campaign against Saddam's regime in Iraq. Throughout January, February, and most of March, we patrolled the Southern No Fly Zone while we watched the case for regime change in Iraq unfold. The night of March 17th, however, everything changed -- instead of patrolling the No Fly Zone, we were suddenly in the middle of a full-fledged shooting war. Once Operation IRAQI FREEDOM kicked off, F-15Es were tasked with, among many other missions, destroying the armored divisions of the Republican Guard in a mission we called tank plinking. And we did destroy tanks...with fury. We also flew Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance (SCAR) missions; a modern version of 'Killer Scout" where we found targets using our excellent sensors and passed them off to other strike aircraft. Our most important mission, however, was Close Air Support, using our firepower to help the Army and Marine Corps troops sweeping toward Baghdad. The Rockets flew over 1,700 combat missions and dropped nearly 1.2 million pounds of bombs

During the course of OIF we painted nose art on every one of the jets in our squadron. Nose art is one of those things that comes and goes depending on the whims of the Generals in charge; over the last decade it has not been officially authorized on most active duty aircraft. Jets from our sister squadron, the 335° FS "Chiefs", had been decorated with nose art for Operation ANACONDA the previous year, so when we received deployment orders I was hoping that we'd get the chance to paint up my squadron's jets this time.

I have been long interested in the rich history of the 4th Fighter Wing, and I was amazed that none of the wing's jets of the modern era have paid tribute to those great heroes of the past with nose art. Even before we deployed I was keeping ideas for nose art and names in a notebook, and I was set on making sure a few "heritage" pieces made an appearance.

The squadron was fortunate that there were others who also had some degree of artistic ability and shared the desire to paint nose art. The majority of the squadron's airplanes were painted by two talented crew chiefs – SSgt Jason Henton and A1C Ryan Stafford – but a number of other maintenance personnel, pilots, and WSOs designed and painted their own jets, too. It was a challenge to find time in our busy schedules to paint, and it was even worse to find time when the jets weren't out flying combat missions!

The "Saddam Hunter" nose art put on A/C 88-1706 was painted by SrA Richard Bugbee. The other jets are as follows:

"Bombay Sapphire-Capt. Hacker Haskin

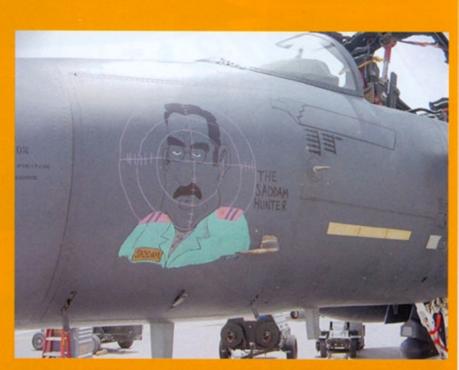
"4 Warned-SSgt Jason Henton

"Southern Outlaw"-SSgt Henton/A1C Ryan Stafford

"Dirty Bird"-A1C William Gillmer

I can only hope that our modern versions of that heritage art pay proper tribute to those heroes of yesteryear.

Captain Randall "Hacker" Haskin 336th Fighter Squadron



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