

Colonel Francis M. Mezzatesta distinguished himself by outstanding service to the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard during a military career spanning 42 years from 1957 to 1999.

Beginning his career as an enlisted person in the supply field in 1957, Colonel Mezzatesta's excellent work ethics were quickly recognized and he was promoted to Sergeant while supporting F-94 aircraft at the Philadelphia International Airport for the 111th Fighter Interceptor Group. When his unit converted to the C-97 aircraft, the young aggressive Mezzatesta decided to change career fields and became a Loadmaster, flying over 4,000 hours including 10 trips to Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

At the end of the decade, Sergeant Mezzatesta returned to Base Supply to help with the massive transition from the heavy C-97 transport to the small O-2 Forward Air Control aircraft. He continued to progress through the enlisted ranks becoming a very young Senior Master Sergeant. His supervisors recognized his potential and he was offered a commission. He graduated from the Academy of Military Science as a Captain in 1978 and became the Base Supply Officer. His efforts made Base Supply an efficient, effective organization and in 1981 he was promoted to the Chief of Supply and the rank of Major just in time to lead the 111th through another aircraft transition to the OA-37 Dragonfly.

During the 1980s, Major Mezzatesta assumed additional responsibilities in Transportation and Base Mobility. He brought the unit's mobility readiness to the highest pinnacle ever achieved and in 1986 was recognized for his many achievements and outstanding leadership by being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and also becoming the commander of the 111th Resource Management Squadron. As a seasoned aircraft conversion specialist, Lieutenant Colonel Mezzatesta provided outstanding leadership when the unit converted to the OA-10 aircraft in 1988 by ensuring the unit had adequate supply, transportation, and fuels. He also commanded the first training deployment with the new aircraft. His proven leadership and excellent work ethics resulted in promotion to Deputy Commander for Resource Management in 1991 and the 111th Logistics Group Commander in 1993. While establishing initiatives of the Motor Pool and Supply facilities, the aircraft maintenance personnel participated in a Quality Air Force Assessment and were awarded eight benchmarks, the highest number of benchmarks achieved by an Air National Guard Unit.

In 1993 when the 111th Fighter Wing was notified to deploy to Kuwait in support of Operation Southern Watch and that they would undergo an Operational Readiness Inspection during the deployment, Lieutenant Colonel Mezzatesta accepted the challenge as the project officer for the deployment. The 111th received an Outstanding rating in Phase I while deploying. When the wing deployed to Al Jaber Air Base in Kuwait again in 1995, he acted as both the Deputy Commander for Logistics and the Deputy Commander for Support. This was the first time an Air National Guard officer commanded both active duty and guard members in-theater. He was promoted to Colonel during the deployment.

Colonel Mezzatesta's illustrious career culminated upon his retirement in 1999, but his contributions will continue to have a positive effect on the 111th Fighter Wing for many years into the future. He is a true Air National Guard leader, leaving a legacy and style for those who follow to emulate, admire, and revere.

The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel Francis Mezzatesta during a lifetime of distinguished service reflect great credit upon himself, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the

Pennsylvania Air National Guard, warranting his induction into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard Hall of Fame.