

## 431<sup>st</sup> TEST AND EVALUATION SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

431<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron activated, 14 May 1943 (By special authority prior to constitution)  
Constituted, 15 May 1943  
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1949  
Redesignated 431<sup>st</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 11 Sep 1952  
Activated, 1 Nov 1952  
Redesignated 431<sup>st</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 25 Jul 1964  
Redesignated 431<sup>st</sup> Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, 30 Apr 1971  
Inactivated, 15 Dec 1971  
Activated, 15 Jan 1976  
Inactivated, 1 Oct 1978  
Redesignated 431<sup>st</sup> Fighter Weapons Squadron, 3 Sep 1980  
Activated, 1 Oct 1980  
Redesignated 431<sup>st</sup> Test and Evaluation Squadron, 30 Dec 1981

#### STATIONS

Chartiers Towers, Australia, 14 May 1943  
Amberley Field, Australia, 1 Jul 1943  
Dobodura, New Guinea, 14 Aug 1943 (operated from Port Moresby, New Guinea, 8 Aug-3 Oct 1943)  
Nadzab, New Guinea, 26 Mar 1944  
Hollandia, New Guinea, 15 May 1944  
Biak, 15 Jul 1944  
Dulag, Leyte, 9 Nov 1944 (detachment operated from San Jose, Mindoro, 5 Feb-4 Mar 1945)

Clark Field, Luzon, 28 Feb 1945  
Lingayen, Luzon, 19 Apr 1945  
Ie Shima, 8 Aug 1945  
Kimpo, Korea, 5 Oct 1945  
Tachikawa, Japan, 20 Feb 1947  
Itazuke, Japan, 15 Nov 1947  
Ashiya, Japan, 25 Mar-1 Apr 1949  
Selfridge AFB, MI, 1 Nov 1952-23 Jun 1953  
Wheeler Field, Libya, 10 Jul 1953  
Zaragoza AB, Spain, 3 Sep 1958  
George AFB, CA, 18 May 1964-30 Oct 1970  
England AFB, LA, 30 Oct 1970-15 Dec 1971  
George AFB, CA, 15 Jan 1976-1 Oct 1978  
McClellan AFB, CA, 1 Oct 1980

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

475<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, 14 May 1943-1 Apr 1949  
4708<sup>th</sup> Defense Wing, 1 Nov 1952  
575<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Group, 16 Feb 1953  
Seventeenth Air Force, 10 Jul 1953  
1603<sup>rd</sup> Air Transport (later 7272<sup>nd</sup> Air Base) Wing, 20 Jul 1953  
7272<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group, 1 Mar 1958  
65<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 1 Sep 1958;  
United States Air Forces in Europe, 1 Jul 1960  
32<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 18 May 1964  
8<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 25 Jul 1964  
831<sup>st</sup> Air Division, 6 Dec 1965  
479<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Jan 1968-30 Oct 1970  
4403<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Oct 1970-15 Dec 1971  
35<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Jan 1976-1 Oct 1978  
57<sup>th</sup> Fighter Weapons Wing, 1 Oct 1980

### **ATTACHMENTS**

347<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, 15 Nov 1947-28 Aug 1948  
65<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 1 Jul 1960  
2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division, 26 Aug 1965-6 Dec 1965  
479<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 6 Dec 1965-14 Jun 1968

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-38, 1943  
P-38H  
P-38L  
P-51D, 1946  
F-51, 1952

F-86F, 1953  
F-102, 1960  
F-4, 1964-1970  
F-100, 1970-1971  
F-4, 1976-197S  
F-102A, 1960  
F-4C  
F-4E  
F-111F

### **COMMANDERS**

Maj Franklin A. Nichols  
Maj Verle E. Jett  
Maj Thomas B. McGuire Jr.  
Cpt Robert F. Cline  
Maj John H. Vogel  
Cpt Edwin R. Weaver

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

None

#### **Campaign Streamers**

China Defensive  
New Guinea  
Bismarck Archipelago  
Western Pacific  
Leyte  
Luzon  
Southern Philippines  
China Offensive

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations  
New Guinea, 18 and 21 Aug 1943  
New Guinea, 15 and 17 Oct 1943  
Philippine Islands, 25 Oct-25 Dec 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device  
1 Dec 1965-31 Mar 1967

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award  
20 Mar 1961-19 Feb 1962  
2 Feb 1976-31 Mar 1977

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm  
1 Apr 1966-31 Mar 1967

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

## EMBLEM



On a grayed dark blue disc, border equally divided red and white, Satan's head affronte, proper, beneath a winged yellow orange halo and between five yellow orange stars forming the Southern Cross. (Approved, 19 Sep 1944)

## MOTTO

## NICKNAME

## OPERATIONS

Combat in Southwest Pacific and Western Pacific, Aug 1943-Jul 1945. Provided air defense from bases in Libya and Spain, 1953-1964. Participated in exercises and operations of Tactical Air Command, 1964-1970, Flew combat missions in Southeast Asia during deployment at Ubon, Aug-Dec 1965. Trained replacement crews in F-4C, F-4D, and F-4E, in turn, 1966-1970, Awarded the Colombian Trophy for flying safely (presented Jul 1967). Provided tactical training for TAG pilots, 1970-1971 and again 1976-1978. Replaced Detachment 3, Headquarters, 57th Fighter Weapons Wing at McClellan AFB and took over F-111 operational testing and evaluation

The 431st Fighter Interceptor Squadron operated in Spain out of Zaragoza Air Base as part of the USAFs contribution of fighter squadrons to the Spanish air defense system. Under the division of

responsibilities, the squadron was assigned to the 65th Air Division and given the mission of air defense for north eastern Spain. On 22 June 1960, the 431st FIS sent twelve airmen to Torrejon Air Base, for a three week training course on the F-102. These men were followed by six pilots who began transition training during September of 1960.

The first F-102A was delivered to the squadron from Saint-Nazaire, France, by the unit commander, LTCOL Joseph J. McCabe on 28 September 1960. On 24 October, the squadron began its official transition to the F-102 and the unit was declared combat ready in late January 1961, reassuming its alert commitment on the 28th. The last of the twenty-nine Delta Daggers assigned to the unit arrived in Spain on 14 February 1961.

The 431st deployed to Wheelus AB from 5 March until 28 April 1961 for weapons training with their new F-102s. The deployments consisted of four flights, each of which stayed for two weeks. The first two flights claimed a number of records and firsts during the deployment including: highest overall success rate for a single deployment, most consecutive successful intercepts in one day, highest number of aircraft with successful missile firings in a single day, highest number of pilots qualified in one day, and the most aircraft qualified in one day.

The unit returned to Wheelus from 26 May to 20 July 1962 to conduct simulated and live firings of AIM-26 missiles. By the end of July 1962, the 431st was certified to carry Falcons and as of 1 August, two AIM-26 loaded F-102As were standing one-hour alerts.

During the first half of 1962 the 431 st FIS began sharing the alert hangar with Spanish Air Force F-86F Sabres of the 21st Fighter Squadron. During the Cuban missile crisis, half of the squadron's pilots and aircraft were on full alert from 22 Oct to 17 Nov 1962.

Early in 1962 degradation of the bearings, bushings, washers, and spacers in the flight control systems caused problems with eighteen TF/F-102As within the squadron. These were all older aircraft (FY54 and FY55 aircraft) and replacement of these items was included in the FY63 MOD/IRAN program.

A third deployment to Wheelus AB was undertaken from 6 July to 2 Aug 1963. Besides weapons training and live firing practice, the squadron also tested new intercept tactics for the USAFE Interceptor Weapons School. The new tactics involved a beam approach and a snap-up maneuver.

On 3 May 1961 the unit's forty-three month record of accident-free flying ended when material failure on F-102A 55-3434 led to damage to three other F-102s on the squadron's ramp at Zaragoza. The aircraft was ready to taxi when an explosion damaged the throttle linkage causing the engine to accelerate. After a high speed spiral around the ramp, the aircraft came to rest after striking TF- 102A 54-1367 and two F-102As (55-3431 and 56-0975). All four aircraft were repaired by CASA, but were out of service for a long time.

On 8 September 1961, TF-102A 55-4038 crashed into the Mediterranean Sea off Barcelona. The squadron commander, LTCOL Joseph J. McCabe, drowned after he and his co-pilot successfully ejected. The co-pilot was rescued by a Navy helicopter.

On 11 June 1962, F-102A 55-3451 suffered a mishap at Zaragoza AB. On a takeoff roll, the left main landing gear strut failed, causing the aircraft to veer off the left side of the runway. The damage was confined mainly to the left wing and belly and it was repaired by the CASA factory at Madrid (the repairs were completed early in 1964).

Another accident took place on 12 December 1963 when F-102A 56-1012 crashed some fifty miles from Zaragoza AB. 1st LT Joseph L. Higgins had an engine flameout at 35,000 feet during a routine mission and could not relight the engine. After gliding down to 8,000 feet, he ejected and was picked up uninjured some twenty minutes later by a helicopter. Two other F-102s were flying with Higgins at the time of the incident. CAPT Robert C. Solomon watched Higgins descend in his parachute and reported his position to the rescue helicopter, while CAPT Henry K. Mills followed the pilotless aircraft. The F-102A suddenly turned toward a cluster of small towns and it quickly became evident that the aircraft might crash among the three villages. CAPT Mills maneuvered his aircraft close to and below the F- 102A so that the flow of air over his wing raised the wing of "012," turning it away from the populated area. When the crippled aircraft turned too far, CAPT Mills repeated the maneuver on the other side until the aircraft finally crashed harmlessly into a ploughed field.

On 13 November 1963, the 431st FIS received an order to plan for the unit's disbandment and on 1 March 1964 the unit was relieved of its alert commitment. On 30 March the squadron was ordered to discontinue operations on or about 18 May 1964. This order was rescinded on 16 July and on 25 July the unit was redesignated as the 431st Tactical Fighter Squadron and assigned to the 8th TFW, flying F-4C.

Most of the F-102s were ferried to the U.S. between 15 April and 1 June 1964. The last aircraft to leave was TF-102A (55-4045) which left Zaragoza on 23 April 1964.

Personnel of the 431st Test and Evaluation Squadron (TAC), the 406th CLSS, the 2951st CLSS at McClellan AFB, California, together with Museum volunteers and an Aircraft Paint Unit, rebuilt an F-102A (56-1140) and repainted it to represent aircraft (5-5431). The restoration was completed during 1985 and the aircraft was presented to the McClellan AFB Museum on 13 January 1986. The aircraft was painted with the Red devil tail markings used by the squadron in Spain and was officially dedicated to the memory of LTCOL McCabe (killed in a crash on 8 September 1961).

F-111 74-0186 was delivered to the USAF on September 8, 1976. It was used as the Pave Tack kit proof aircraft. It's seen here during Pave Tack testing. Of interest is the AGM-65 Maverick on the inboard pylon, next to the GBU-15 on the adjacent pylon. While assigned to the 431st Test and Evaluation Squadron, It was used in the testing of the GBU-28 5000 lb class laser guided bomb. The first release of this weapon occurred over the Tonopah Test range in Nevada on February 23, 1991. Four days later it was released by 70-2391 against a target in Iraq. 74-0186 received the

Pacer Strike Modification. The aircraft arrived at AMARC on July 10,1996. When retired, the aircraft had a total of 3,220.3 flight hours.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Unit yearbook. *Wheelus Field, Libya, A Pictorial Record of a Modern USAF Base*. Lt Worth R. Johnson. International Publishing Service, Rome, Italy. 1955.