

437th FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

437th Fighter Squadron constituted, 5 Oct 1944
Activated, 15 Oct 1944
Inactivated, 30 Sep 1946
Redesignated 437th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 14 Nov 1952
Activated, 27 Nov 1952
Inactivated 29 Apr 1968
Activated 18 Jul 1968
Inactivated and discontinued 30 Sep 1968

STATIONS

Seymour Johnson Field, NC, 15 Oct 1944
Selfridge, Field, MI, 21 Nov 1944
Bluethenthal Field, NC, 19 Mar-5 Jun 1945
North Field, Iwo Jima, 7 Jul 1945
Clark Field, Luzon, 23 Dec 1945
Floridablanca, Luzon, unkn-30 Sep 1946
Otis AFB, MA, 27 Nov 1952
Oxnard AFB, CA, 18 Aug 1955

ASSIGNMENTS

414th Fighter Group, 15 Oct 1944-30 Sep 1946
4707th Defense Wing, 27 Nov 199
564th Air Defense Group 16 Feb 1953
414th Fighter Group 18 Aug 1955

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-47, 1944-1946

P-47D

P-47N

F-94 1952-1955, 1955-1956

F-89, 1955, 1956-1960

F-101, 1960

F-94C

F-89D

F-89H

F-89J

F-101B

F-106A

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Japan

Eastern Mandates

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

None

EMBLEM



On a white disk with a light green border, a tiger's face, in natural colors except for the eyes

which are green with red pupils, on and over a rocket (gray with blue nose and red bands) diagonally placed on and over the disk with nose to dexter base. (Approved, 1 Sep 1953)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

Fighting 437th

OPERATIONS

Combat in Western Pacific, 13 Jul-14 Aug 1945.

The 437th FIS was the only F-89 squadron to actually fire against an intended legitimate target. In August 1956 two of their F-89Ds were scrambled from Oxnard against a U. S. Navy F6F Hellcat drone that had escaped from its radio controller at Point Mugu, California. The Hellcat had been launched as a missile target, but as soon as it broke ground and its landing gear had been retracted, radio control was lost. The aircraft, trimmed for climb, spiraled up to 31,000 feet, and then slowly started to drift south in large circles towards Los Angeles. While arguments between the USN and the USAF took place as to who would be responsible to bring down the wayward Hellcat, the "what ifs" scenarios created bedlam at the Los Angeles Air Defense Sector.

The Hellcat entered the westerlies, the prevailing off shore winds at its altitude, and then started to drift over Palmdale, Lancaster, and Edwards AFB areas. The two 437th FIS F-89Ds were scrambled and intercepted the F6F, and the F-89 pilots and their ROs discussed their options. The Hughes FCS gave them the choice of firing their rockets in a wings-level attitude under its Phase III method, or under Phase II, firing while both the interceptor and its target were turning.

They selected Phase II, and each F-89 made an interception, got their "splash signal," but their rockets refused to fire. They repeated their Phase II interceptions, and again the rockets refused to fire, and it was later discovered that the system would not work under this configuration, due to a design glitch.

The next option selected was to fire visually. Their F-89Ds had originally been delivered with gunsights, but these had just been removed the month before. It was decided to set the intervalometer to fire twenty-six rocket salvos at a time, which would give each F-89 four opportunities to hit the F6F.

The first Scorpion lined up on the Hellcat and its pilot "Mark 1 eyeballed" the F6F and fired, shotgunning the Hellcat without effect. The second F-89 lined up and fired his rockets, and all went underneath the target. The F-89s lined up again and each readjusted their intervalometers to salvo off their remaining rockets, as by this time the F-89s were starting to run low on fuel. They all missed.

As the Hellcat continued its loose orbit, the fired Mighty Mouse rockets began to fall to earth. One went through an engine block of a pickup truck on Highway 395. Another blew a hole in a street in Lancaster. Rockets rained down all over the area, but nothing was hurt but the Air Force's pride. The F6F finally ran out of fuel and crashed in the desert, probably laughing all the way down.

By the end of June 1956 the 437th FIS had twenty-four F-89Ds, but the newer H models were scheduled, and by the end of the year they had eleven D models remaining and twelve H models. The 437th FIS represented the WADF and the 27th Air Division during the 1956 USAF Gunnery and Weapons Meet (Interceptor Phase) at Yuma AFB. The team of Colonel E. F. Carey and Lt. C. E. Lockwood placed Second. The F-89H models continued to be short-lived, and by the end of June 1958 they had been replaced in the 437th FIS by twenty-three F-89JS. By the end of December 1959 the 437th Scorpions in total were in a phase-out, with only nine remaining and F-101 Bs beginning to arrive.

The first F-94C Starfire squadron was the 437th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Otis AFB, MA. They were activated after a six year hiatus on November 23, 1952 and were assigned to the 564th Air Defense Group on February 16, 1953. On March 10, 1953 they received their first of sixteen assigned F-94Cs.

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.