

23 FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE¹

23 Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 22 1939

Activated, 1 Feb 1940

Redesignated 23 Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942

Redesignated 23 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 20 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 31 Mar 1946

Activated, 15 Oct 1946

Redesignated: 23 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, 27 Oct 1947

Redesignated 23 Fighter Squadron, Jet, 17 Jun 1948

Redesignated 23 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 20 Jan 1950

Redesignated 23 Fighter-Day Squadron, 9 Aug 1954

Redesignated 23 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8 Jul 1958

Redesignated 23 Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1991

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX, 1 Feb 1940

¹ Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

USAF Accident Investigation Board Reports.

Unit history. *36th Fighter Bomber Wing. @1952*

Unit yearbook. *36 Fighter Bomber Wing, Germany, 1954.*

History. Wheelus Field; *The Story of the US Air Force in Libya. The Early days 1944-1952.* R. L. Swetzer.

Historical Division Office of Information USAFE. 15 Jan 1965.

Brooks Field, TX, 1 Feb 1940
Langley Field, VA, 17 Nov 1940
Losey Field, Puerto Rico, 6 Jan 1941
St Croix, 31 May 1941
Losey Field, Puerto Rico, 15 Nov 1941
Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, 13 Dec 1941 (detachments operated from St Thomas, Mar 1941–
6 May 1943; and Arecibo, Puerto Rico, 11 Mar–16 May 1943)
Morrison Field, FL, c. 21 May 1943
Mitchel Field, NY, 16 Jun 1943
Charleston, SC, 22 Jun 1943
Galveston AAFld, TX, 18 Sep 1943
Dalhart AAFld, TX, 27 Oct 1943
Bruning AAFld, NE, 24 Dec 1943–11 Mar 1944
Kingsnorth, England, 6 Apr 1944
Brucheville, France, 3 Aug 1944
Le Mans, France, 6 Sep 1944
Athis, France, 26 Sep 1944
Juvincourt, France, 3 Oct 1944
Le Culot, Belgium, 28 Oct 1944
Aachen, Germany, 28 Mar 1945
Niedermennig, Germany, 8 Apr 1945
Kassel/Rothwesten, Germany, 21 Apr 1945–15 Feb 1946
Bolling Field, DC, 15 Feb–31 Mar 1946
Howard Field, CZ, 15 Oct 1946–22 Jul 1948
Furstenfeldbruck AB, Germany, 17 Aug 1948
Bitburg AB, Germany, 17 Nov 1952
Spangdahlem AB, Germany, 31 Dec 1971

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Incirlik AB, Turkey, 17 Jan–15 Mar 1991

ASSIGNMENTS

36th Pursuit (later, 36th Fighter) Group, 1 Feb 1940–31 Mar 1946
36th Fighter (later, 36th Fighter-Bomber; 36th Fighter-Day) Group, 15 Oct 1946
36th Fighter-Day (later, 36th Tactical Fighter) Wing, 8 Dec 1957
52nd Tactical Fighter (later, 52nd Fighter) Wing, 31 Dec 1971
52nd Operations Group, 31 Mar 1992

ATTACHMENTS

7440th Composite Wing, 17 Jan–15 Mar 1991

WEAPON SYSTEMS

YP-37, 1940
P-36, 1940

P-39, 1941
P-40, 1941
P-47, 1943
P-80B, 1947
F-84, 1950
F-86, 1953
F-100, 1956
F-105, 1961
F-4, 1966
F-16, 1987

COMMANDERS

Capt Joseph A. Bolger, 1 Feb 1940
1st Lt Frederick W. Baggett, Dec 1940
Capt Ralph E. Holmes, Nov 1941
Capt Holmes, 1 Feb 1940
Maj James B. League, 6 Dec 1940
Maj Dunham, 20 Jul 1942
Capt Joseph Kirkup, Dec 1942
Maj Joe Giltner, 6 May 1943
Maj Hallock P. K. Walmsley, 16 Jun 1943
Maj H. C. Junkerman, Mar 1944
Maj Richard T. Deabler, 13 Apr 1944
Maj Alexander W. Cortner, 10 May 1944
Maj Albert E. Miles, Jul 1944
Maj Alfred A. Weegar, 22 Jan 1945
Capt Walter B. Walker Jr., Jul 1945
Maj Louis Yeager, Oct 1945
Maj Louis H. Norley, 10 Nov 1945-Unkn
Lt Col Hallock P. K. Walmsley, 15 Oct 1946
Lt Col Rodney E. Gunther, 14 Apr 1947
Maj Wallace B. Frank, 19 Nov 1948
Lt Col Rodney E. Gunther, 14 Dec 1948
Lt Col Charles W. Boedeker, 3 Feb 1949
Maj George H. Crist, Oct 1949
Maj Harold H. Broach, 10 Feb 1950
Lt Col George F. Ceuleers, 28 Aug 1950
Lt Col Lawrence J. Pickett, 26 Dec 1950
Maj Charles V. Garino, Dec 1951
Lt Col Marvin E. Childs, Dec 1952
Maj Riegel W. Davis, Oct 1953
Lt Col Sylvester V. Burke, 9 Dec 1953
Maj Carl J. Luksic, 1954
Lt Col Donald S. Glover 1954

Maj Robert D. Brown, 1 Jul 1955
Lt Col Edward C. Fletcher, 1 Sep 1957
Maj Erwin A. Hesse, By Jul 1958
Lt Col Elmer E. Springer Jr., Dec 1960
Lt Col Robert E. Wayne, 1 Sep 1963
Maj William W. Pinner, Jun 1965
Lt Col Parks M. Rea, 1 Jul 1966
Lt Col Robert L. Larsh Jr., 1 Sep 1966
Lt Col Charles P. Busick, Dec 1968
Lt Col Paul S. Cleland, Jun 1969
Lt Col John J. Gaudion, 24 Aug 1970
Lt Col Delbert M. Corum, 1 Jan 1972
Maj Thomas A. Baker, 26 Feb 1973
Lt Col Thomas E. Rowney, 1 Mar 1975
Lt Col Henry V. Hall, 16 Jul 1976
Lt Col Charles P. Winters, 1 Jul 1977
Lt Col Richard C. Fairlamb, 19 Dec 1978
Lt Col Ronald E. Henry, 3 Aug 1979
Lt Col Robert W. Thompson, 30 Jul 1981
Lt Col Douglas M. Nix, 4 Apr 1983
Lt Col Lesley L. Kersey, 15 Jun 1984
Lt Col Curtis H. Emery li, 12 Jul 1985
Lt Col Dale E. Hollrah, 20 Oct 1986
Lt Col Anthony W. Groves, 30 Dec 1987
Lt Col David L. Moody, 3 Oct 1989
Lt Col Jeffrey G. Blanchette, 12 Jun 1991
Lt Col William F. Rake, 26 Mar 1993
Lt Col Leslie D. Fielder, 10 Nov 1994
Lt Col Robert P. Steel, 10 Jun 1996
Lt Col Michael R. Boera, 5 Jun 1997
Lt Col Richard A. Reynolds, 3 Jun 1999
Lt Col Steven S. Kempf, 12 Jun 2001
Lt Col John W. Specht, 19 Jun 2003
Lt Col William A. Woodcock, 26 Aug 2005
Lt Col Steven A. Vlasak, 6 Apr 2007
Lt Col Michael D. Lay, 30 Oct 2008

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Antisubmarine, American Theater

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Southwest Asia
Defense of Saudi Arabia
Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
France, 1 Sep 1944
Germany, 12 Apr 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device
1 Sep 1990–26 Feb 1991

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

May 1956–May 1958
1 Jan–31 Dec 1968
1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980
1 Jul 1991–30 Jun 1993
1 Jul 1993–30 Jun 1995
1 Aug 1995–31 Jul 1997
1 Jul 1997–30 Jun 1999
24 Mar–10 Jun 1999
1 Jul 1999–30 Jun 2001
1 Jul 2001–30 Jun 2003
1 Jul 2003–30 Jun 2005

Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army
1 Oct–17 Dec 1944
18 Dec 1944–15 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

EMBLEM



On a Grayed Yellow Orange disc, a caricatured Red, White, and Blue hawk, wearing Tan flight jacket and aviator's helmet, Blue goggles, and Brown boxing gloves, diving toward sinister base, and emitting White speed lines to rear. COPYRIGHT—Walt Disney. (Approved, 23 Sep 1943)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Antisubmarine patrols, 12 Dec 1941–Apr 1943.

Departed 2 January 1941 from the port of Newport News on the U.S.A.T. Chateau Thierry for duty stations in Puerto Rico. Arrived 6 January 1941 at Ponce, PR. Transferred to Losey Field, PR, and, as part of the 36th Pursuit Group, assigned to the Caribbean Defense Command. Transferred on 31 May 1941 to St. Croix, VI. Transferred on 15 November 1941 to Losey Field, PR.

After Dec. 7, 1941, the 23 PS patrolled the islands of the Caribbean for enemy aircraft and submarines. The squadron was renamed the 23 Fighter Squadron in 1942, and converted to the P-47 Thunderbolt in June 1943. In March 1944, the 23 FS deployed to Royal Air Force Kingsnorth, England, and 9th Air Force's 36th Fighter Group. The squadron earned the Distinguished Unit Citation in September 1944 for missions flown from England and forward bases in France supporting the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge.

Between October 1944 and January 1945, while operating from airfields in Belgium, the squadron earned two citations in the Belgian Army Order of the Day as well as the Belgium Fourragere. The unit was awarded a second Distinguished Unit Citation for action in Germany during April 1945.

Occupational force, Germany, May 1945–Feb 1946.

Regular gunnery training by USAFE's F-80's was resumed on 22 March 1950, with the arrival at Wheelus of several aircraft of the 23 Fighter-Bomber Squadron. The F-80's ran into trouble during the first week of April due to fuel contamination, and they were grounded until 16 April. Two days later, the jet fighters left for Germany. Investigation revealed rust and other foreign matter in the fuel furnished by Shell-Petrolibya and the need to replace a pipeline connecting the storage tank with the filling point.

Throughout 1951, USAFE's F-84s continued to use Wheelus for gunnery training and transition flying. On 1 August the 526th Fighter-Bomber Squadron arrived to replace the 23 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, which had left for home on 18 July. The last unit of the year was the 92d Fighter Squadron from Manston, England, which arrived at Wheelus on 30 November 1951 and departed for home on 19 December, the first for 1952 was the 53rd Fighter-Bomber Squadron which arrived on approximately 15 Jan 1952. This unit was, in turn, replaced on 25 Feb by the 23 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, which brought with it approximately 27 officers, 150 airmen, 25 F-84s and two B-26 tow target aircraft. The 23 was at Wheelus primarily for transition training.

In January 1991, at the outbreak of the Gulf War, the 23 FS deployed to Incirlik AB, Turkey. During Operation Proven Force, squadron F-16Cs and F-4Gs flew nearly 1,000 defense suppression, combat air patrol and interdiction missions over Iraq without a single loss. The

squadron earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor for its part in driving the Iraqi army from Kuwait.

In September 1991, the squadron's remaining F-4Gs were replaced by F-16Cs. In July 1993, the 23 FS was the first U.S. unit to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina for Operation Deny Flight. In January 1994, the squadron received the first F-16CJ Block 50 aircraft.

The squadron completed conversion to the latest version of the F-16CJ in January 1995 and became U.S. Air Forces in Europe's only defense suppression squadron. In September of that same year, members of the 23 FS took part in Operation Deliberate Forge -- the largest air assault in NATO history. The unit flew 224 sorties during the air campaign against Bosnian Serb forces.

Pilots from the 23 FS were the first to employ high-speed anti-radiation missiles (HARM) in combat. The squadron's efforts contributed to the peace process and the resulting Dayton Agreement, which ended more than four years of bloody conflict in the Balkans.

February to June 1999, the 23 FS deployed to Aviano AB, Italy, where it was assigned to the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing for Operation Allied Force. The squadron supported the NATO mission to degrade and damage the military and security structure that the Yugoslav President used to destroy the Albanian majority in Kosovo. During Allied Force the 23 FS flew over 1000 combat sorties and fired 191 HARM shots to silence the over 100 surface to air missile sites in Kosovo and Yugoslavia. The squadron was repeatedly noted for bravery in the face of danger while flying these combat operations in Allied Force.

From November 2000 to March 2001 the 23 FS deployed in support of Operation Southern Watch to patrol the southern no-fly zone over Iraq. During the deployment the squadron provided suppression of enemy air defenses in both air-to-ground and air-to-air roles. In March of 2001, the 23 provided SEAD for the largest strike in Iraq since Operation Desert Fox. During the strike to take out command and control facilities in Iraq, the 23 ensured the safety of all allied strikers.

F-16s of the US Air Forces in Europe began a two-month rotational assignment at Incirlik AB, Turkey, in January, after a hiatus of more than sixteen years. F-16 pilots from the 52nd Fighter Wing's 22nd Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem AB, Germany, arrived 3 January. They were replaced when pilots from the 23 FS arrived on 2 February. More than 650 sorties were flown between the two squadrons. The successful rotational training concluded at the end of February. Access to the Konya AB bombing range was granted by Turkish officials. The weather in Turkey was considerably better than the winter weather in Germany, which improved the quality of the training flights. 2007