

31 FIGHTER WING



MISSION

The mission of the 31 Fighter Wing is to conduct and support air operations in Europe's southern region and to maintain munitions for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and national authorities. The 31 FW maintains two F-16 fighter squadrons, the 555th and the 510th, capable of conducting offensive and defensive air combat operations as required in support of U.S. and NATO taskings.

In peacetime, the 31 FW prepares for its combat role by maintaining its aircraft and personnel in a high state of readiness. The 31 FW also includes the 603rd Air Control Squadron, capable of providing air surveillance, control and communications.

The 31 FW is the only U.S. fighter wing south of the Alps. During a NATO crisis, the wing's operational forces become part of the 5th Allied Tactical Air Force, located at Vicenza, Italy. This, and its strategic location, makes the wing critical to operations in NATO's southern region.

The 31 FW also supports three geographically-separated units: The 712 Munitions Squadron and 704th Munitions Support Squadron, Ghedi Air Base, Italy and the 496 Air Base Squadron, Moron Air Base, Spain.

LINEAGE

31 Fighter Wing established, 6 Nov 1947

Organized, 20 Nov 1947

Redesignated 31 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 20 Jan 1950

Redesignated 31 Fighter-Escort Wing, 16 Jul 1950

Redesignated 31 Strategic Fighter Wing, 20 Jan 1953

Redesignated 31 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 1 Apr 1957

Redesignated 31 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Jul 1958
Redesignated 31 Tactical Training Wing, 30 Mar 1981
Redesignated 31 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Oct 1985
Redesignated 31 Fighter Wing, 1 Oct 1991

STATIONS

Turner Field (later, AFB), GA, 20 Nov 1947
George AFB, CA, 15 Mar 1959
Homestead AFB, FL, 31 May 1962-6 Dec 1966
Tuy Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 16 Dec 1966-15 Oct 1970
Homestead AFB, FL, 15 Oct 1970-1 Apr 1994
Aviano AB, Italy, 1 Apr 1994

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Misawa AB, Japan, 20 Jul 1952-11 Oct 1952
Misawa AB, Japan, 11 Nov 1953-12 Feb 1954

ASSIGNMENTS

Ninth Air Force, 20 Nov 1947
Fourteenth Air Force, 1 Feb 1949
Second Air Force, 1 Jul 1950
40 Air Division, 14 Mar 1951
Ninth Air Force, 1 Apr 1957
831 Air Division, 15 Mar 1959
Ninth Air Force, 1 Jun 1962
836 Air Division, 1 Oct 1964
834 Air Division, 1 Jan 1965
836 Air Division, 1 Aug 1966
Seventh Air Force, 25 Dec 1966
836 Air Division, 15 Oct 1970
Ninth Air Force, 30 Jun 1971
Sixteenth Air Force, 1 Apr 1994

ATTACHMENTS

39 Air Division [Defense], 10 Jul-11 Oct 1952 and 10 Nov 1953-12 Feb 1954
Air Force Atlantic Command, 24 Oct-9 Nov 1962
1 Air Division Provisional, 10 Nov-30 Nov 1962
Seventh Air Force, 16-24 Dec 1966

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P (later, F)-51, 1947-1949
F-84, 1948-1950, 1951-1957
KB-29, 1954, 1956-1957
F-100, 1957-1959, 1959-1970

KB-50, 1957-1958

F-4, 1970-1988

F-16, 1985

COMMANDERS

Col William L. Lee, 20 Nov 1947

Col Eugene H. Snavely, 16 Aug 1948

Col Alvan C. Gillem II, C. 26 Dec 1950

Col Eugene H. Snavely, 10 Mar 1951

Col Carl W. Stapleton, 14 Mar 1951

Lt Col Charles W. Lenfrost, 9 Apr 1951

Col David C. Schilling, 1 May 1951

Lt Col Charles W. Lenfrost, C. 27 May 1951

Lt Col William D. Dunham, 22 Jun 1951

Lt Col Gerald W. Johnson, 1 Jul 1951

Col David C. Schilling, 20 Jul 1951

Col Robert P. Montgomery, 16 May 1955

Col Gordon M. Graham, 15 Jul 1955

Col Hubert Zemke, 1 Aug 1955

Col Gordon M. Graham, 13 Oct 1955

Lt Col Harold L. Williams, Feb 1959

Col Robert W. Stephens, 15 Mar 1959

Col Herbert E. Ross, 26 Aug 1959

Col William D. Ritchie, 5 Oct 1959

Col Jack R. Brown, 2 Oct 1961

Col Frank J. Collins, 14 Oct 1961

Col William E. Bethea, 9 Mar 1964

Col Franklin A. Nichols, 16 Mar 1964

Col Ernest T. Burnett, 30 May 1965

Col James Jabara, 17 Jun 1965

Col Raymond C. Lee Jr., 17 Nov 1966

Col Warren R. Lewis, 28 Nov 1966

Col William J. Evans, 7 Dec 1967

Col Abner M. Aust Jr., 3 May 1968

Col Cuthbert A. Pattillo, 8 Feb 1969

Col William B. Yancey Jr., 8 Aug 1969

Col Gilbert D. Hereth, 15 Jun 1970

Brig Gen Wiltz P. Segura, 15 Oct 1970

Col David E. Rippetoe Jr., 28 May 1971

Col Alonzo J. Walter Jr., 16 Jun 1972

Col Dudley J. Foster, 1 Mar 1974

Col Walter J. Bacon II, 7 Mar 1975

Col Samuel R. Johnson, 14 Jun 1976

Col William A. Gorton, 31 Aug 1978

Col Eugene H. Fischer, 2 Jan 1980
Col Robert H. Baxter, 5 Jan 1982
Col Billy G. Mccoy, 20 Jun 1984
Col Charles L. Hehn, 27 Jun 1985
Col Hiram H. Burr Jr., 5 Sep 1986
Col Walter T. West, 28 Apr 1988
Col John L. Welde, 7 May 1990
Col Stephen B. Plummer, 1 Aug 1991
Col William T. Rudd, 6 Nov 1992
Col John H. Campbell, 1 Apr 1994
Brig Gen Charles F. Wald, 24 May 1995
Brig Gen Timothy A. Peppe, 3 Jul 1997
Brig Gen Daniel P. Leaf, 30 Nov 1998
Brig Gen Daniel J. Darnell, 21 Jan 2000
Brig Gen Donald J. Hoffman, 25 May 2001
Brig Gen R. Michael Worden, 9 Oct 2002
Brig Gen Philip M. Breedlove, 18 Jun 2004
Brig Gen Robert Yates, 1 Jun 2005
Brig Gen Craig A. Franklin, 1 Jun 2007
Brig Gen Charles Q. Brown, 9 Jun 2009
Brig Gen Scott J. Zobrist, 22 April 2011

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Vietnam Air Offensive
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III
Vietnam Air/Ground
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV
TET 69/ Counteroffensive
Vietnam Summer-Fall, 1969
Vietnam Winter-Spring, 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Southwest Monsoon

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citation
Vietnam, 1 May-31 Dec 1968

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device
17 Dec 1966-30 Apr 1968

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

4-16 Jul 1952
1 Mar-30 Nov 1962
1 Jun-16 Dec 1966
1 Apr 1994-1 Apr 1966
2 Apr 1996-1 Apr 1998
1 Oct 2000-1 Oct 2002
2 Oct 2002-30 Sep 2004

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses with Palm

17 Dec 1966-31 Oct 1970
1 Jan 1968-19 May 1969

Bestowed Honors

Authorized to display honors earned by the 31 Operations Group prior to 20 Nov 1947

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Algeria-French Morocco, with Arrowhead
Tunisia; Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno
Southern France
North Appenines
Po Valley
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Rumania, 21 Apr 1944
Poland, 25 Jul 1944

EMBLEM



31 Fighter-Escort Wing emblem



31 Tactical Fighter Wing emblems



31 Fighter Wing emblem: Per bend nebule Or and Azure, in chief of a Wyvern sans legs, wings

endorsed of the second, highlights Celeste, all within a diminished bordure Or. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "RETURN WITH HONOR" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The nebule dividing the field symbolizes clouds, the area of the unit's operations. The legless Wyvern represents strength and ferociousness in the air when faced with the enemy. (Approved, 13 Dec 1951)

MOTTO

Return With Honor

OPERATIONS

Trained to achieve tactical proficiency, 1947-1950. From Dec 1950 through Jul 1951, all tactical and most support components deployed to England. Thereafter, deployed to provide air defense in Japan, Jul-Oct 1952 and Nov 1953-Feb 1954.

The wing made aviation history on 22 September 1950, when Colonel David Schilling, wing commander, flew an F-84E from Manston, England to Limestone, Maine, in 10 hours and one minute. He earned distinction as the first pilot to fly non-stop across the Atlantic Ocean in a jet aircraft and received the Harmon Trophy for this feat.

1952 Fox Peter One and Fox Peter Two - The use of in-flight refueling as a means of speeding up mass flights of fighters was soundly and profitably tested during two significant deployments to Japan. In early July, Colonel David C. Schilling led 58 F-84Gs of the 31 Fighter- Escort Wing from Turner Air Force Base, Georgia, to Misawa and Chitose Air Bases, Japan. The revolutionary flight, nicknamed Fox Peter One, was the first mass fighter deployment to be supported by in-flight refueling. KB-29 tankers of the 2d and 91st Air Refueling Squadrons refueled the fighters on the first leg of the flight from Turner to Travis Air Force Base, California. The second refueling, conducted by tankers of the 2d, 91st, and 93d Air Refueling Squadrons, was carried out on the Travis to Hawaii leg of the flight. From Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, the fighters island-hopped to Japan, with en route stops at Midway, Wake, Eniwetok, Guam, and Iwo Jima. It took approximately ten days to complete that portion of the flight from California to Japan. In late 1950, it had taken over two weeks to move the 27th Wing's F-84Es by aircraft carriers from California to Japan, and it took several more days to get them ready for combat. For this 10,919-mile flight, the 31 Wing was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award in early 1954. The 31 was the first unit to receive this USAF award. The 27th Fighter-Escort Wing was selected to replace the 31 Wing in Japan under the 90-day rotational training program. Nicknamed Fox Peter Two, this deployment involved 75 F-84Gs under the command of Colonel Donald J. Blakeslee. The 7,800-mile flight, much shorter than Fox Peter One, began at Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas, on 3 October and terminated at Misawa Air Base, Japan, on 14 October. En-route stops were made at Travis, Hickam, and Midway, while in-flight refuelings were accomplished on the Travis to Hickam and the Midway to Misawa legs. Aircraft were grounded one day at Hickam and held over another day at Midway because of bad weather.

Earned an outstanding unit award for making the first massed jet fighter crossing of the Pacific Ocean, in Jul 1952.

1953 Operation Longstride and the Fourth Mackay Trophy - Swift deployment of F-84Gs across the Atlantic became equally important to SAC operations, particularly since the F-84 had been converted to a fighter-bomber with a nuclear bombing capability. Appropriately nicknamed Operation Longstride, the first mass nonstop fighter flight over the Atlantic was a dual mission conducted by the 31 and 508th Strategic Fighter Wings, located at Turner Air Force Base, Georgia. These wings were assigned to the 40th Air Division. The first phase of Operation Longstride began at 0743 ZULU time, on 20 August, when Colonel David C. Schilling, 31 Wing Commander, led a flight of nine F-84s off the runway at Turner Air Force Base. One Thunderjet spare accompanied the flight as far as Savannah, Georgia, and then returned home, while the main flight of eight continued on its way to North Africa. Three in-flight refuelings by KC-97 aircraft were required to get the fighters across the Atlantic. Operating out of Kindley Air Force Base, Bermuda, KC-97s of the 305th Air Refueling Squadron furnished the first two refuelings, while KC-97s of the 26th Air Refueling Squadron positioned at Lajes Air Force Base, Azores, provided the third refueling. The formation of eight landed at Nouasseur Air Base, French Morocco, approximately 10 hours and 20 minutes after leaving Turner. After spending a few days at Lakenheath RAF Station, England, the flight returned to Turner on 2 September.

Within a few minutes after Colonel Schilling's flight was on its way to North Africa, the second phase of Operation Longstride began. This flight of 20 Thunderjets was led by Colonel Thayer S. Olds, 40th Air Division Commander, and Colonel Cy Wilson, 508th Wing Commander. Using the North Atlantic route, the 508th's fighters were also refueled three times, once over Boston by KB-29 tankers of the 100th Air Refueling Squadron, once near Labrador by KC-97s of the 26th Air Refueling Squadron, and once near Iceland by KC-97s of the 306th Air Refueling Squadron, which was TDY to England. The main flight of 17 landed at Lakenheath RAF Station, England, approximately 11 hours and 20 minutes after leaving Turner. Three Thunderjets were held over one day at Keflavik before completing the flight. The flight returned to Turner on 12 September.

The wing was redesignated again on 20 January 1953, when it became known as the 31 Strategic Fighter Wing. During this time the wing deployed (on temporary 30-day assignments) to Japan and Alaska to provide air defense in the northern Pacific. The wing also assumed the role of in-flight refueling with the assignment of the 58th Air Refueling Squadron on 11 May 1956. Then on 1 April 1957 the wing, except for the 58 ARS, transferred back to the Tactical Air Command, was redesignated the 31 Fighter-Bomber Wing, and converted to F-100Cs. In September 1957 a fourth fighter squadron, the 306th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, was activated and assigned to the wing. On 1 July 1958 the wing's name changed for the fifth time. It became the 31 Tactical Fighter Wing, a name it kept for the most part until 1991. (For a four-year period during that time it was known as the 31 Tactical Training Wing.)

Rotated tactical components to Alaska, 1956-1957, and to Europe, 1958-1959. Became non-operational in Mar 1959, moved to George AFB, CA, and absorbed personnel and equipment of

inactivated units.

On 15 March 1959 the wing moved without people or equipment to George AFB, California. During the time in California, the wing deployed units for four-month alert rotations to Moron AB, Spain and Aviano AB, Italy.

Reassigned to Homestead AFB, FL, in May 1962 and subsequently stood air defense alert during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Oct-Nov 1962. In 1963 the wing earned a second Outstanding Unit Award in for achievements attained in 1962. During that time they moved from George AFB to Homestead AFB, Florida, while simultaneously deploying a squadron to Kadena AB, Japan, for a four-month TDY without losing any operational capability.

On 8 February 1964 the 308th Fighter Squadron flew a non-stop mission from Homestead AFB, Florida, to Cigli AB, Turkey. The 6,600 mile trip required eight in-flight refuelings and set a new record for the longest mass flight of jet aircraft to cross the Atlantic. The flight also led to the wing receiving the Tactical Air Command Outstanding Fighter Wing Award for 1964, the second consecutive year it won that prestigious award.

In June 1965 the 307 TFS deployed to Beinh Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam; the 308 TFS replaced them in December, having moved there as a permanent change of station. The following April, the 307 TFS deployed, permanent change of station, to Torrejon AB, Spain, and in November 1966 the wing received orders to deploy, permanent change of station, to Tuy Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam. An unexpected consequence of this move came when the wing commander, Colonel James Jabara, was killed in an automobile accident while driving his family to their new home in South Carolina where they were to await his return from his first tour in Vietnam.

The 31 TFW arrived at Tuy Hoa AB, assigned to the Seventh Air Force, on Christmas Day 1966. The wing provided close air support and ground interdiction for US and RVN Army units in the central region of the country. In 1968 they helped defend installations against enemy forces during the Tet Offensive and the siege of Khe Sahn, and were later singled out for their outstanding contribution during the extraction of friendly forces from Kham Duc. They reached 100,000 combat sortie milestone in September 1969. The wing earned two Outstanding Unit Awards, one with Combat "V" Device, a Presidential Unit Citation, two Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses with Palm, and ten Campaign Streamers for action in Vietnam.

On 15 October 1970 the wing returned to Homestead AFB, Florida, without people or equipment, as part of the US force reduction in Vietnam. At the same time, the wing switched from flying F-100s to F-4Es. Conducted F-4 replacement training from 1 Jul 1971 and rotated components to Southeast Asia, Apr 1972-Jun 1973.

In July 1971, the 306 TFS inactivated and the 307 TFS moved without personnel or equipment to Homestead AFB, returning the wing to its original squadrons. The wing assumed a dual-role function with the primary mission of air defense of the southern Florida and the secondary as a replacement training unit. The 307 TFS and 309 TFS were designated to perform the pilot

replacement training. From April to August 1972 the 308 TFS deployed to Udorn Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand to augment tactical air forces already deployed to that country, followed in July by the 307 TFS. In June 1972, Captains John Cerak and David B. Dingee of the 308 TFS were shot down and captured by the North Vietnamese, and confirmed as prisoners of war. In March 1973 both were released and returned to the United States. On 15 October 1972, Captains James L. Hendrickson and Gary M. Rubus of the 307 TFS, who replaced the 308 TFS at Udorn, Thailand, shot down a MiG-21 northeast of Hanoi. This marked the first aerial victory for the 31 TFW in Vietnam and the first for the wing since the end of World War II. The 308 TFS completed the wing's final deployment to Southeast Asia from December 1972 to June 1973.

Assumed primary responsibility for air defense in southern Florida on 1 Apr 1976 and advised Air National Guard (ANG) fighter units on operational matters. In Sep 1979-Sep 1980, transferred nearly half of its F-4E aircraft to Egypt (Project PEACE PHAROAH) and the remainder to the ANG, and re-equipped with F-4D aircraft.

On 30 March 1981, the wing assumed a larger responsibility for training all F-4 aircrews, and with the change, assumed a new designation as the 31 Tactical Training Wing. Training became the primary mission until 1985 when the wing received its next aircraft, the F-16, and resumed an air defense mission. With the change, the wing's designation changed yet again to the 31 Tactical Fighter Wing. This continued until 1992 when, on 1 June, as part of the most extensive restructuring since the Air Force became a separate service, the Tactical Air Command inactivated and the Air Combat Command activated, and the 31 Tactical Fighter Wing redesignated to its current name, the 31 Fighter Wing.

Everything changed for the wing on 24 August 1992, when Hurricane Andrew swept across southern Florida, leaving extensive damage in its wake. Every building on Homestead AFB received some damage, many buildings were destroyed. The fighter squadrons evacuated most of the planes before the storm, but were unable to return. In the aftermath, the Secretary of Defense recommended complete closure of the base, but in June 1993, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommended to realign the base under the Air Force Reserve and The damaged control tower and base operations building on Homestead AFB, Florida, after Hurricane Andrew smashed into the base on 24 August 1992.

Air Force leadership had been looking at the whole realignment process following the end of the Cold War and they discovered that the Air Force was losing its heritage. When a base closed, the unit assigned to the base typically inactivated. With so many base closures taking place, many of the most significant wings were being inactivated, along with their history and heritage. In order to stop the trend, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Merrill McPeak, initiated a program whereby units in danger of being inactivated would be compared to another unit to determine which was the most significant, and move the most significant unit to keep its history active. Such was the case of the 31 Fighter Wing. As the highest scoring Army Air Force unit in the Mediterranean Theater in WWII, added to their combat record in Vietnam and the number of significant firsts they produced in the early years of the Air Force, the 31 FW was chosen to move rather than fade into obscurity. So on 1 April 1994, the 31 Fighter Wing

inactivated at Homestead AFB, Florida, and subsequently activated at Aviano AB, Italy, in place of the 401st Fighter Wing.

The 31 FW received two new squadrons at that time, the 510th and 555th Fighter Squadrons, along with their Block-40 F-16s. The wing immediately became involved with events in Bosnia, part of the former communist country of Yugoslavia, in May 1994, as part of Operation DENY FLIGHT. In August and September, Operation DELIBERATE FORCE began and the 31 FW conducted air strikes against Bosnian Serbs conducting ethnic purges among the Muslim population of the country. Peacekeeping operations continued in the Balkans through the end of 2004, when the European Union assumed responsibility for the region.

In 1999 USAFE activated the 31 Air Expeditionary Wing-NOBLE ANVIL at Aviano AB, Italy, for Operation ALLIED FORCE, the NATO operation to stop Serbian atrocities in the Province of Kosovo. Assigned under a joint task force, the 31 AEW flew from Aviano and joined NATO allies in a 78-day air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia). From 24 March-10 June 1999, the 31 AEW, the largest expeditionary wing in Air Force history, flew nearly 9,000 combat sorties and accumulated almost 40,000 hours of combat service over the skies of Kosovo, Serbia, and the rest of the Balkans in support of NATO operations. The wing accomplished much during OAF as the two permanently assigned flying squadrons, the 510 FS and 555 FS, combined for over 2,400 sorties and over 10,000 combat hours. Additionally, as the first Aviano OAF squadrons to fly 1,000 combat sorties, 555 FS reached the 1,000 combat sortie mark on 27 May 1999 and the 510 FS followed suit two days later.

Following the end of Operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF) in June 1999, the 31 Fighter Wing became fully entrenched in the Expeditionary Air Force. With the exception of a deployment to Operation NORTHERN WATCH (ONW) in 1998, the wing had not deployed to support a contingency operation since before it activated at Aviano. Instead, the wing fought "in place," supporting operations in the Balkans.

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In 2000, the wing began its full-fledged participation in the Expeditionary Air Force. From March to September 2000, the 510th and 555th Fighter Squadrons conducted back-to-back deployments to Ahmed Al Jaber AB, Kuwait, in support of Operation Southern WATCH (OSW). While at Al Jaber, the squadrons flew over 400 combat sorties providing precision-guided munitions (PGM) delivery while patrolling the southern NFZ. Then, the “Scorpions” of the 603d Air Control Squadron (603 ACS) deployed to Ali Al Salem AB, Kuwait from February to June 2001. As the core of the 386th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, the 121 personnel of the 603d served as the primary air control squadron for OSW. Significantly, the deployment marked the first-ever deployment of the 603d outside of Europe.

From June 2001 through May 2002, the fighter squadrons deployed their Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) capability three times to Operation NORTHERN WATCH. From June through December, the squadrons helped enforce the northern NFZ over Iraq, and then the 555 FS returned to Incirlik from March to May 2002. The fall and winter of 2002 saw the wing’s largest ever deployment effort since arriving at Aviano. From August to December, the 510 FS and 603 ACS returned to Southwest Asia. The 603d supported Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) while the 510th supported OSW while flying missions over Afghanistan in support of OEF. At the same time, the 555th deployed its personnel and aircraft, including those personnel and aircraft not deployed with the 510th, to Decimomannu AB, Sardinia because the runway at Aviano closed for repairs.

Since the beginning of combat operations in Iraq, forces from the wing have been on regular combat rotations into the region. In late 2003 the 603 ACS became the first unit from the 31 FW deployed to Iraq where they provided provide air control for the country. In an air control squadron first, they relocated their entire operation from Baghdad International Airport to Balad AB. Under combat conditions, the squadron transferred \$73 million in equipment and over 100 personnel via 20 convoys. Significantly, the squadron accomplished the move with no loss of command and control services. Unfortunately, the squadron also sustained a loss during its time in Iraq. On 10 April 2004, insurgents launched a mortar rocket attack on Balad, killing A1C Antoine Holt and injuring two other Scorpions. Airman Holt’s death constituted the 31 FW’s first combat fatality since the Vietnam War.

From December 2003 to early March 2004, the 510 FS deployed in support of OEF and OIF. Over the course of almost 900 sorties, the squadron conducted close air support (CAS) and airborne forward air control (FAC-A) missions. The 555 FS replaced the 510 FS in the AOR. While in Iraq, the Triple Nickel performed the first true urban close CAS missions in recent history. Finally, the squadron pioneered the Air Force’s first operational F-16 employment of Advance Targeting Pods.

31 FW continued deploying forces to OEF and OIF, with people supporting combat operations every year since 2003. The fighter squadrons and the air control squadron accounted for the largest groups to deploy, but each year upwards of one-third of the wing went to some base in direct support of the Global War on Terror. The only significant deviation from this pattern occurred in 2007 when the 555 FS deployed to Kunsan AB, Republic of South Korea to provide theater support to the US Forces Korea commander. This marked the first time in history that an entire USAFE fighter unit deployed to Asia. In 2008 and 2009, neither fightersquadron deployed in support of OEF and OIF, as the wing was undergoing a massive aircraft upgrade program. The 603 ACS, remained actively engaged in the AOR and deployed in 2008 and 2009 to the Middle East. In 2010, the 510 FS again rejoined the Air Expeditionary Forces and deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. There, the unit employed the GBU-54 for the first time in combat in Afghanistan.

Since arriving at Aviano the wing has also participated in numerous training exercises with our international partners. In late November 2002, the 555 FS deployed to Caslav AB, Czech Republic, to provide combat air patrols over the site of the NATO Summit. The deployment included the real world diversion of an unidentified airliner. Covering NATO Summits continued as the wing deployed to Riga, Latvia to provide Presidential support and overflight protection the 2007 NATO Summit, as well as the 2008 Summit in Bucharest, Romania. Members of the 31 FW continue to expand their influence around Europe. With the addition of former Eastern Block countries into NATO and the European Union, the wing has been working with these new partners to train their air forces to integrate into the NATO community. Members of the wing have deployed to Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Poland, and those countries have opened up their air to ground ranges for use in joint training exercises.

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USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

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The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.
Unit yearbook. *Turner AFB, GA, 31 Fighter Bomber Wing, 1957*. Army and Navy Publishing Co Inc. Baton Rouge, LA. 1957.
Unit yearbook. *831 Air Division, George AFB, CA. 1959*.