

8th FLYING TRAINING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

8th Photographic Squadron constituted, 19 Jan 1942

Activated 1 Feb 1942

Redesignated 8th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, 9 Jun 1942

Redesignated 8th Photographic Squadron (Light), 6 Feb 1943

Redesignated 8th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, 13 Nov 1943

Redesignated 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night Photographic, 10 Aug 1948

Redesignated 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Jet, 1 Aug 1949

Inactivated, 25 Feb 1951

Redesignated 8th Flying Training Squadron, 14 Apr 1972

Activated, 1 Nov 1972

STATIONS

March Field, CA, 1 Feb–14 Mar 1942 (two flights at March Field, CA, to 16 Jun 1942)

Melbourne, Australia, 7 Apr 1942

Brisbane, Australia, 24 Apr 1942

Townsville, Australia, 2 May 1942

Port Moresby, New Guinea, 9 Sep 1942

Nadzab, New Guinea, 16 Mar 1944 (operated from Biak after 11 Aug 1944)

Biak, 10 Sep–20 Oct 1944

Dulag, Leyte, 4 Nov 1944 (air echelon at Clark Field, Luzon, 19 May–12 Aug 1945)

Okinawa, 21 Jul 1945

Chofu, Japan, 28 Sep 1945
Irumagawa, Japan, 25 Jan 1946
Yokota AB, Japan, 25 Mar 1949 (detachment operated from Itazuke AB, Japan, from 29 Jun 1950)
Itazuke AB, Japan, 9 Jul 1950
Taegu AB, South Korea, 2 Oct 1950
Komaki AB, Japan (operated from Taegu AB, South Korea), 26 Jan–25 Feb 1951
Vance AFB, OK, 1 Nov 1972

ASSIGNMENTS

IV Air Support Command, 1 Feb 1942
Fifth Air Force, 29 Mar 1942
V Bomber Command, 5 Sep 1942
6th Photographic (later, 6th Reconnaissance) Group, 13 Nov 1943
V Bomber Command, 27 Apr 1946
314th Composite Wing, 31 May 1946
71st Reconnaissance (later, 71st Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 28 Feb 1947
Fifth Air Force, 1 Apr 1949
543rd Tactical Support Group, 26 Sep 1950–25 Feb 1951
71st Flying Training Wing, 1 Nov 1972
71st Operations Group, 15 Dec 1991

ATTACHMENTS

Allied Air Forces, Apr–Sep 1942
V Bomber Command, 10 Dec 1945
314th Composite Wing

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-38/F-4, 1942–1944
P-38/F-5, 1943–1946
B-17, 1942–1943
B-26, 1943–1944
F-6D
F-6K, 1946
P-51D
F-5E
P-61, 1946
F-15 (later, RF-61), 1947–1949
RF-80A, 1949–1951
RF-80C
T-37, 1972

COMMANDERS

Capt Karl L. Polifka, 1 Feb 1942
1st Lt Frank S. Savage, 12 Nov 1942

Capt A. L. Post, 4 Jun 1943
Capt John G. Foster, 20 Jun 1943
Capt Delasso Loos, 8 Dec 1943
Maj Richard J. Shipway, 1 Apr 1944
Maj Richard C. Bailey, 25 Mar 1945
Capt Culbertson, Nov 1945
1st Lt Heath Bottomly, 9 Dec 1945
Unmanned, 2 Apr 1946-20 Jun 1946
Capt Russell M. H. O'day, 20 Jun 1946
Capt Rowan M. Jarvis; Aug 1946
Capt Wilmer H. Moore, Nov 1946
Capt Lewis T. Graves, Dec 1946
Capt Rowan M. Jarvis, Apr 1947
Maj Benjamin H. Albertson, May 1947
Lt Col Ben K. Armstrong, Jr., 2 Aug 1947
Maj Russell E. Cheever, 6 Apr 1948
Lt Col Charles W. King, 25 Mar 1949
Lt Col Jacob W. Dixon, 28 Nov 1949-25 Feb 1951
Lt Col Eugene I. Halbach, C. Nov 1972
Lt Col John W. Wolfe, 15 Aug 1974
Lt Col John E. Rush, 19 Sep 1974
Lt Col Richard J. Beland, 17 Aug 1976
Lt Col James P. Ulm, 26 Jul 1978
Lt Col J. W. Burns, 12 Jun 1980
Lt Col Joseph G. Schad, 19 Feb 1982
Lt Col William A. Johansen, 11 Feb 1984
Lt Col Thomas G. Moore, 20 Dec 1985
Lt Col Tommy G. Brown, 3 Mar 1987
Lt Col Peter U. Sutton, 4 Dec 1987
Lt Col Daniel C. Ulmer, 16 Sep 1988
Lt Col Thomas A. Bath, 2 Aug 1990
Lt Col Charles E. Stallworth, 8 Jul 1992
Lt Col Gary E. Barrentine, 11 Jul 1994
Commander John B. Hollyer, Usn, 28 Mar 1996
Lt Col Jerry L. Free, 4 Oct 1996
Commander Mark S. Laughton, Usn, 9 Oct 1997
Lt Col Dietmar Amelang, 18 Sep 1998
Commander Lawrence S. Coy, Usn, 7 Jan 2000
Lt Col William M. Jones, 9 Mar 2001
Commander David R. Swathwood, Usn, 22 Mar 2002
Lt Col Greg S. Lamb, 15 May 2003
Commander Brian Osborn, Usn, 1 Jun 2004
Lt Col Terrance J. Mccaffrey, 14 Jun 2005
Commander Todd Rader, Usn, 23 Jun 2006

Lt Col Neil E. Woods, 1 Jun 2007
Commander Roger L. Curry, Usn, 30 Oct 2008
Lt Col James M. Gifford, Jr., 19 Jun 2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
East Indies
Air Offensive, Japan
China Defensive
Papua
Guadalcanal
New Guinea
Northern Solomons
Bismarck Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Korea
UN Defensive
UN Offensive
CCF Intervention
First UN Counteroffensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Papua, 23 Jul 1942–23 Jan 1943
Philippine Islands, 18–[20] Sep 1944
Philippine Islands, [26] Nov–15 Dec 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan–31 Dec 1975
1 Jan 1977–30 Apr 1978
1 May 1982–30 Apr 1984
1 Apr 1986–31 Mar 1988

1 Apr 1988–31 Mar 1990

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
10–[24] Feb 1951

EMBLEM





Celeste, on a mount issuing two palm trees in dexter Vert, and below a cloud Argent surmounted in sinister by a lightning flash palewise Azure, a caricature of a native American proper, attired with a feather palewise from hair of the third tipped Gules above a chevron reversed of the fourth and a loin cloth of the like bordered White and Red; pendant from a neck strap, a camera Sable and Argent and grasping in sinister hand, a tomahawk proper with his dexter hand resting on the number eight pool ball proper overall in base. The Indian represents the first reconnaissance squadron to leave the US after the outbreak of WWII. (A Flight of the 8th PRS departed for Australia in April 1942.) The Camera represents the squadron's photo mission. The Hatchet is for the Japs and the Lightning Bolt represents the P-38 (F-4). The Palm Trees are for the Pacific Islands. The 8 ball is for the squadron's number. (Approved, Jun 1990 and slightly modified, 13 Apr 1995; replaced emblems approved, 8 Aug 1984 and 2 Jan 1973)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Combat in Southwest Pacific and Western Pacific, 16 Apr 1942–25 Aug 1945.

The 8th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron of the 5th Air Force was formed at March Field, California, on 1 February 1942 with 3 Officers and 28 enlisted men. Nine more officers from the 4th Mapping Squadron joined 8 PRS on 7 March 1942. Another 40 volunteer enlisted men from the 102nd Observation Squadron at Morrow Field also joined 8 PRS at March Field. The squadron originally consisted of three Flights, A, B, and C. The three flights were united in Australia after the unit left March Field, in March and February of 1942.

"A" Flight was hurriedly transported to Australia aboard the S.S. President Coolidge on 19 March 1942. "A" Flight arrived in Camp Pell, Melbourne on 7 April 1942, and departed for Camp Doomben, Brisbane on 24 April 1942. They only had four F-4 Lightning aircraft which were operational in late April and early May 1942 under the command of 1st Lieutenant Karl L. "Pop" Polifka. He commanded 8 PRS until November 1942 when he was posted to Europe. In April 1942, Polifka acquired a B-24 Liberator and crew, which he used to photograph the gathering of the Japanese fleet at Rabaul.

"A" Flight left Camp Doomben for Townsville on 2 May 1942. "B" and "C" Flights arrived at Camp Murphy, Melbourne, on 16 July 1942 aboard the S.S. Matsonia, and departed for Townsville on 27 July 1942. When they arrived in Townsville "A" Flight was attached to the 19th Bomb Group for administration purposes.

The 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron were flying out of the Stock Route airfield while they were in Townsville. Jim McEwan described it as "a little dirt field that was located down a short road leading from the front of Garbutt field. It was farm land but later when I came down to Townsville from Port Moresby to have our B-17 repaired there were a few large hangars on that little road."

The 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron set up their photographic laboratory in a high set house at 630 Sturt Street, Townsville. Bud Sowers was the officer in charge of the photo lab.

On 5 September 1942, 3 Officers and 80 enlisted men left Townsville for Port Moresby. By mid-October the whole of the Squadron was operating from Schwimmer Drome north of Port Moresby.

The 8th lost an F-4 on 2 May 1942. The plane was flown by Captain Louis J. Connely, and was reported MIA over Lae, New Guinea. It is believed that Captain Connely did not survive.

Not operational, Apr 1946–Jul 1947.

Combat in Korea, 29 Jun 1950–24 Feb 1951.

Undergraduate pilot training for USAF, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and selected foreign allies, 1 Nov 1972.

On 6 Sept 00, at approximately 0821 Central Standard Time (CST), the mishap aircraft (MA), a T-37, S/N 67-2241 crashed approaching Vance AFB, approximately 1 mile north of runway 17 left (17L). The mishap pilot (MP), an ensign assigned to the 8 FTS, 71 Flying Training Wing, Vance AFB, Oklahoma, was flying a syllabus directed pattern-only solo sortie in the early phases of Joint Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training. This was his second solo sortie, his first solo sortie since his initial solo on 29 Aug 00. The MP did not attempt to eject and was pronounced dead at the scene. The MA was destroyed upon impact with the loss valued at approximately \$1,000,000.00. The impact area was in a plowed agricultural field. To date, no claims for damage to private property have been filed as a result of this mishap. Clear and convincing evidence showed that the student was in the final turn for the first touch and go landing of this sortie. The aircraft appeared to be overshooting the inside runway (runway 17L) and the MP rolled into 70-90 degrees of bank to correct the overshoot, significantly exceeding the 45 degree maximum angle of bank allowed by the technical order (AETC Manual 3-3). The nose of the aircraft initially began quickly tracking towards the landing runway, indicating the MP added significant back pressure in an attempt to minimize the pattern overshoot. As a result of excessive bank angle and back pressure combined with low airspeed, the T-37 appeared to stall with a near snap entry into a configured spin. Due to the low altitude of the stall and spin entry, the MP was unable to successfully recover or eject prior to ground impact. There were two occasions in the sequence of events where the mishap could have been avoided. As a result of improper wind analysis (overshooting wind) and/or loss of situational awareness (identifying 17C vice 17L as the landing runway), the MP set up an inside downwind ground track too close to the correct inside runway, 17L. Additionally, he initially used insufficient bank in the final turn to correct for the spacing and the overshooting winds. This resulted in a final turn that overshot runway 17L. As a result of the overshoot, the MP should have maintained aircraft control using a maximum of 45 degrees of bank, initiated a go-around, and accepted whatever ground track resulted, relying on the Runway Supervisory Unit (RSU) to direct any conflicting traffic approaching 17C out of his way. Instead the MP rolled into 70-90° of bank and added back pressure in an attempt to maintain the proper ground track, resulting in the stall and subsequent configured spin entry from which no recovery was possible. There are two categories of factors directly contributing to this accident: human factors and supervision.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 28 Aug 2010

Updated: 15 Oct 2023

Sources

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.