

## 53<sup>rd</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

53<sup>rd</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Fighter) constituted, 22 Nov 1940  
Activated, 1 Jan 1941  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, (Twin Engine), 15 May 1942  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, 28 Sep 1942  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 20 Aug 1943  
Inactivated, 31 Mar 1946  
Activated, 15 Oct 1946  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, 27 Oct 1947  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, Jet, 17 Jun 1948  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 20 Jan 1950  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter-Day Squadron, 9 Aug 1954  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8 Jul 1958  
Redesignated 53<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1991

#### STATIONS

Rio Hato, Panama, 1 Jan 1941  
Albrook Field, CZ, 1 Jan 1941  
Rio Hato, Panama, 21 Aug 1941  
France Field, CZ, 12 Dec 1941  
Chorrera, Panama, 7 Jan–8 Jun 1943  
Charleston AAFld, SC, 23 Jun 1943  
Biggs Field, TX, 15 Sep 1943  
Ainsworth AAFld, NE, 23 Nov 1943–11 Mar 1944  
Kingsnorth, England, 5 Apr 1944

Brucheville, France, 7 Jul 1944  
Le Mans, France, 29 Aug 1944  
Athis, France, 23 Sep 1944  
Juvincourt, France, 5 Oct 1944  
Le Culot, Belgium, 23 Oct 1944  
Aachen, Germany, 28 Mar 1945  
Niedermennig, Germany, 8 Apr 1945  
Kassel/Rothwesten, Germany, 20 Apr 1945–15 Feb 1946  
Bolling Field, DC, 15 Feb–31 Mar 1946  
France Field, CZ, 15 Oct 1946  
Howard Field (later, AFB), CZ, 1 Dec 1947–21 Jul 1948  
Furstenfeldbruck AB, Germany, 13 Aug 1948  
Bitburg AB, Germany, 22 Jul 1952  
Landstuhl (later, Ramstein) AB, Germany, 17 Dec 1956  
Bitburg AB, Germany, 3 Oct 1961  
Spangdahlem AB, Germany, 1 Feb 1994

#### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Al Kharj AB, Saudi Arabia, 20 Dec 1990–1 Jul 1991

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

32<sup>nd</sup> Pursuit (later, 32<sup>nd</sup> Fighter) Group, 1 Jan 1941; 36<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, 23 Jun 1943–31 Mar 1946  
36<sup>th</sup> Fighter (later, 36<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber; 36<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Day) Group, 15 Oct 1946  
36<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Day (later, 36<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter; 36<sup>th</sup> Fighter) Wing, 8 Dec 1957  
36<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 31 Mar 1992  
52<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group, 25 Feb 1994

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

36<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Day Wing, 1 Oct 1956–7 Dec 1957  
Tactical Fighter Wing Provisional, 4, 20 Dec 1990–20 Mar 1991  
Tactical Fighter Wing Provisional, 4404, 20 Mar 1991–1 Jul 1991

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-26, 1941  
P-26A  
P-36, 1941–1942  
P-40, 1942–1943  
P-40B  
P-40C  
P-40E  
P-47, 1943–1946  
P-47C  
P-47D

P-47N

P-47, 1946–1947

P(later, F-)80, 1947–1950

F-80B

F-84, 1950–1953

F-84E

F-86, 1953–1956

F-100, 1956–1961

F-105, 1961–1966

F-4, 1966–1977

F-4D

F-15, 1977

### **COMMANDERS**

LTC Darrell S. Cramer, #1952

Maj Rudolf A. Bellan

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

World War II American Theater

#### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

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**

None

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

France, 1 Sep 1944

Germany, 12 Apr 1945

## Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

May 1956–May 1958

1 Jan–31 Dec 1968

1 Dec 1973–30 Apr 1975

1 Jul 1975–30 Jun 1977

1 Jul 1977–30 Jun 1979

1 Jul 1986–30 Jun 1988

1 Jul 1988–30 Jun 1990

1 Sep 1990–31 Jul 1991

## Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army

1 Oct 1944–17 Dec 1944

18 Dec 1944–15 Jan 1945

## Belgian Fourragere

### EMBLEM



On a Light Grayed Blue Violet disc, thin border Red, piped White, a caricatured, pugnacious tiger proper, strutting on hind legs, wearing a Dark Red turtleneck sweater, a Black and White derby hat, and a pair of White boxing gloves on the forelegs, emitting White speed lines to the rear. COPYRIGHT—Walt Disney. (Approved, 28 Oct 1943.

### MOTTO

### NICKNAME

### OPERATIONS

Air defense for the Panama Canal until Jun 1943. Combat in ETO, 8 May 1944–8 May 1945.

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 53d Fighter-Bomber Squadron which arrived on approximately 15 Jan 1952 This unit was, in turn, replaced on 25 Feb by the 23d Fighter-Bomber Squadron, which brought with it approximately 27 officers, 150 airmen, 25 F-84's and two B-26 target tow aircraft. The 23d was at Wheelus primarily for transition training.

Combat in Southwest Asia, Jan–Feb 1991.

Two F-15Cs from the 53 Fighter Squadron, piloted by Lt Col Randy W. May and Capt Eric E. Wickson, shot down two United States Army UH-60s over northern Iraq killing all 26 in no fly zone within Iraq in friendly fire incident. 1994

30 May 1995 An F-15C 79-0068, crashes on take-off killing pilot Maj. Donald Lowry, Jr., 36, who dies en route to hospital. Cause was cross-connected control rods for the flaps. The U.S. Air Force, despite awareness of poorly coordinated color scheme for keeping the rods from being misconnected (identical cases in 1986 and 1991, which, fortunately, were detected before leading to accidents), subjects two mechanics to courts martial for criminally negligent homicide, punishable by four years in prison, a dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of all pay and allowances. One defendant committed suicide on 3 October 1995, the date the court martial was due to begin. On 13 November, the service, citing "justice and the interests of the Air Force", dropped its case against the other mechanic, in exchange for his decision to leave the military.

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Air Force Order of Battle  
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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. *36 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.