

57th FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

57th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 20 Nov 1940

Activated, 15 Jan 1941

Redesignated 57th Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942

Disbanded, 1 May 1944

Reconstituted, 24 Mar 1947

Activated in the reserve, 15 May 1947

Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949

Redesignated 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 11 Feb 1953

Activated, 27 Mar 1953

Redesignated 57th Fighter Squadron

Inactivated

STATIONS

Hamilton Field, CA, 15 Jan 1941

Everett, WA, 26 Jun 1941

Harding Field, LA, 31 Jan 1942 (detachment operated from San Diego, Calif, 28 May-12 Jun 1942)

Anchorage, AK, 20 Jun-30 Sep 1942

Kodiak, AK, 30 Sep-1 Dec 1942)

Bartow AAFld, FL, 11 May 1943-1 May 1944

Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, 15 May 1947-27 Jun 1949

Presque Isle AFB, ME, 27 Mar 1953

Keflavik Aprt, Iceland, 12 Nov 1954

ASSIGNMENTS

54th Pursuit (later Fighter) Group, 15 Jan 1941-1 May 1944

459th Bombardment Group, 15 May 1947-27 Jun 1949

528th Air Defense Group, 27 Mar 1953

Iceland Air Defense Force, 13 Nov 1954

1400th Operations Group, 18 Dec 1955

Air Forces Iceland, 1 Jul 1960

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-39, 1941-1943

P-39F

P-38J

P-51, 1943-1944

P-51A

P-51B

P-51C

F-89, 1953-1962

F-89C

F-89D

F-89J

F-102A, 1962

F-4C, 1973

F-4E

P-39F

P-39J

P-51A

P-51B

P-51C

COMMANDERS

Maj Claude Hanley

LTC Edward Staley

HONORS

Service Streamers

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
[Alaska, Jun]-4 Nov 1942

EMBLEM



On 2 blue disc with a white cloud formation outlined in black issuing from base crossed by a yellow lightning flash striking from upper right toward lower left, a black helmet garnished white, all with a yellow border; in base an and over the border a black scroll edged with white bearing three white stars. (Approved, 27 Apr 1954)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

The Black Knights of Aroostook
Black Knights

OPERATIONS

Air defense of the west coast, May-Jun 1942, and Alaska, 20 Jun-1 Dec 1942; replacement training, Apr 1943-Apr 1944

While awaiting delivery of their Scorpions, the 57th FIS R/Os trained in TB-25K Mitchell bombers that had been converted to airborne radar trainers by Hughes Aircraft Corporation. The pilots flew T-6 Texans. Finally, on June 18, Major 'Tex' Hanley and 1st Lt. Vernon Burke flew in the first two F-89Cs. By the end of September the squadron had grown to 81 officers, 249 enlisted men, and had twenty-one F-89Cs, along with a T-33A and two TB-25Ks. Also in September they commenced pulling ADC alert duties.

On September 31 the 57th FIS lost their first F-89 and crew when Merle Hroch and R/O 2nd Lt. John Terpinitz "were up leading a two-plane section." After returning to Presque Isle and after their wingman landed, Hroch shot a practice approach, "went around, called for landing

instructions." Their F-89 was unheard from again, and it was found inverted in a swamp five miles south of Presque Isle the next morning with its crew dead.

On March 4 the 57th FIS lost a Scorpion on takeoff from Griffiss AFB, where they had stopped while on a cross-country mission. Their F-89 was seen to climb out slowly while flames were seen emitting from its aft section. Crewed by two pilots, operations officer Captain Staton and 1st Lt. Ernie Neubert, the F-89 hit high tension wires and crashed, and both were killed. Gene Zierden became the squadron's new operations officer.

There is some evidence that the 57th FIS was a "snake bit" squadron while at Presque Isle, for on May 24 they lost another F-89C, but this time with a happier outcome. 1st Lt. Vernon Burke and R/O 2nd Lt. Leroy Vestal took a Scorpion up on a maintenance test flight and lost all of their electrical systems. After running out of fuel, they made what was believed to be the first successful double ejection from a F-89. Although they had to walk out of rugged wooded country, both were uninjured.

In August 1954 the 57th FIS at Presque Isle received two dozen F-89Ds from Northrop and things were looking quite modern, but it was not to be, for as soon as the acceptance checks were accomplished these Scorpions were transferred to the 82nd FIS, and the 57th FIS continued with the older C models, remaining equipped with them when their own alert notice of an impending transfer to Iceland arrived.

On October 20, 1954, the first 57th FIS F-89C headed for Iceland so the 57th FIS could relieve the 82nd FIS that was stationed there with F-94Bs.

The 57th FIS staged through Goose Bay, Blue West 1, and on to Keflavik, usually in flights of four, and met returning flights of F-94s in the process.

On October 22, 1954, the 82nd FIS started their transfer to Presque Isle with their F-94Bs and their first contingent got as far as Narsarsuak Air Base, Greenland, before the weather held them up. At Narsarsuak Air Base they met the first group of 57th FIS F-89Cs that were headed the other way, a problem that also affected the second batches of both squadrons aircraft. Finally, on November 10 the Scorpions made it to Keflavik and the last of the 82nd FIS F-94Bs departed.

In August 1955 the 57th FIS finally obtained F-89Ds of their own, with their C models being transferred to the Michigan and Montana ANG.

On July 1, 1962, the 57th FIS, now known simply as the "Black Knights," was transferred from the control of MATS back to the Air Defense Command, which once again returned the Scorpion to ADC's inventory for a short period. But two and a half months later the 57th FIS switched to F-102As. These last twelve ADC Scorpions came to an inglorious end, as some were buried in volcanic ash while others were relegated to the fire department at Keflavik and were burned in training exercises.

1973 22 January F-102A 56-1321, of the 57th FIS, crashes into the ocean about 17 NM from Keflavik, Iceland. This brought an end to 58 months of accident free flying for the 57th.

The 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron operated the F-102 when conversion to the F-4C began in 1973 at NAS Keflavik, Iceland. The squadron operated in the air defense role.

The 57th FIS out of Iceland received its first F-4E during Spring 1978. The last one left November 25, 1985.

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.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.