

357th FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

The 357th Fighter Squadron trains pilots in the A-10 and OA-10 Thunderbolt II. The 357th 'Dragons' conducts all formal course directed aircraft transition, day and night weapons and tactics employment, day and night air refueling and dissimilar air combat maneuvers. The squadron trains pilots to plan, coordinate, execute, and control day and night close air support, air interdiction and battlefield surveillance and reconnaissance. Squadron prepares pilots for combat mission ready upgrade.

LINEAGE

357th Fighter Squadron constituted and activated, 12 Nov 1942
Redesignated 357th Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 20 Aug 1943
Inactivated, 20 Nov 1946
Redesignated 357th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, 11 Sep 1952
Activated, 1 Nov 1952
Discontinued, 8 Mar 1960
Redesignated 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 13 Apr 1962
Organized, 8 Jul 1962
Inactivated, 10 Dec 1970
Activated, 15 Mar 1971
Redesignated 357th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, 1 Jul 1976
Redesignated 357th Fighter Squadron, 1 Nov 1991

STATIONS

Orlando, FL, 12 Nov 1942
Norfolk Muni Aprt, VA, 18 Feb 1943
Langley Field, VA, 4 Mar 1943
Millville AAFld, NJ, 27 Apr 1943

Philadelphia Muni Aprt, PA, 17 May–16 Jun 1943
Steeple Morden, England, 8 Jul 1943
Gablingen, Germany, 17 Jul 1945
Schweinfurt, Germany, 15 Apr–1 Aug 1946
Mitchel Field, NY, 1 Aug–20 Nov 1946
Portland Intl Aprt, OR, 1 Nov 1952–14 Mar 1953
Nouasseur AB, French Morocco (later, Morocco), 28 May 1953–8 Mar 1960
George AFB, CA, 8 Jul 1962
McConnell AFB, KS, 21 Jul 1964
Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, 29 Jan 1966–10 Dec 1970
McConnell AFB, KS, 15 Mar 1971
Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, 22 Mar 1971

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Yokota AB, Japan, 9 Aug–9 Dec 1964
Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 12 Jun–8 Nov 1965

ASSIGNMENTS

355th Fighter Group, 12 Nov 1942–20 Nov 1946
4704th Defense Wing, 1 Nov 1952
503rd Air Defense Group, 16 Feb 1953
Seventeenth Air Force, 1 Jun 1953
316th Air Division, 18 Sep 1953–8 Mar 1960
Tactical Air Command, 13 Apr 1962
355th Tactical Fighter Wing, 8 Jul 1962
835th Air Division, 8 Nov 1965
355th Tactical Fighter Wing, 29 Jan 1966–10 Dec 1970
23rd Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Mar 1971
4453rd Combat Crew Training Wing, 22 Mar 1971
355th Tactical Fighter (later, 355th Tactical Training; 355th Fighter) Wing, 1 Jul 1971
355th Operations Group, 1 May 1992

ATTACHMENTS

Air Defense Division, Provisional, 8 Jun–17 Sep 1953
41st Air Division, 9 Aug–9 Dec 1964
6234th Tactical Fighter Wing, 12 Jun–8 Nov 1965
23rd Tactical Fighter Wing, 8 Nov 1965–28 Jan 1966

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-47, 1943–1944
P-47C
P-47D
P-51, 1944–1946
P-51B

P-51C
P-51D
F-86, 1952–1960
F-105, 1962–1970
F-105D
F-4, 1971
A-7, 1971–1979
A-10, 1979
A-10C

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Vietnam
Vietnam Defensive
Vietnam Air
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

None

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Germany, 5 Apr 1944

Presidential Unit Citations (Southeast Asia)

11 Jun–21 Nov 1965
29 Jan–10 Oct 1966
11–12 Aug and 24–28 Oct 1967
12 Apr 1968–30 Apr 1969

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

12 Oct 1966–11 Apr 1967
12 Apr 1967–11 Apr 1968
1 Jul 1969–24 Nov 1970

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1971–1 Jun 1973
1 Oct 1976–31 May 1978
1 Jan 1991–31 Dec 1992

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Apr 1966–10 Dec 1970

EMBLEM



357th Fighter Squadron emblem: On a disc Or, a dragon's head issuant from dexter chief to sinister base Sable, eyed and langued Gules, detailed Argent, all within a narrow border Black. Attached below the disk, a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "357TH FIGHTER SQ" in Black letters. 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 dragon symbolizes the Squadron's

hatred for all forms of treachery. His open mouth portrays their alertness, strength and eager desire to strike quickly. The dragon's head, striking toward the base, depicts the unit's planes' speedy descent from great height. On a deep Yellow disc, piped Black, a Black striking dragon's head, trimmed White, eye and tongue Red. (Approved, 29 Jun 1943)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

Dragons

OPERATIONS

Combat in ETO, 14 Sep 1943–25 Apr 1945. Combat in Southeast Asia, c. 13 Jun–c. 7 Nov 1965 and 8 Feb 1966–6 Oct 1970. Trained A-7 aircrews, Jul 1976–Oct 1979 and A-10 aircrews, Oct 1979–c. Oct 1991.

The 357th Fighter Squadron began at Orlando Field, Fla., in November 1942. The unit transferred to Steeple Morden England in July 1943, flying the P-47 and P-51. By the end of World War II, the unit accounted for 535 enemy aircraft damaged or destroyed. Six 357th pilots became aces before the war's end.

The unit transitioned to Germany, where it remained until inactivation at Mitchell Field, NY, in November 1946. The 357th reactivated in November 1952 as the 357th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Portland International Airport, Ore., flying the F-86.

In 1953, the unit was ordered to Nouasseur Air Base, French Morocco, North Africa, to provide air defense for American facilities in Morocco. The squadron was inactive from March 1960 until reassignment to the Tactical Air Command as the 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron, George AFB, CA., July 1962, flying the F-105.

In June 1964 and November 1965, the unit supported Southeast Asian flying operations. It flew out of Japan and Thailand on a temporary duty basis, then resumed flying training at McConnell AFB, KS Until January 1966 when the unit relocated to Takhli Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand.

Prior to inactivation in December 1970, the unit participated in 13 Vietnamese campaigns with six 357th pilots credited with MiG kills, including Maj. Leo K. Thorsness (who retired as a Colonel), one of 12 Vietnam-era Air Force members decorated with the Medal of Honor.

In March 1971, the 357th roosted at Davis Monthan AFB this time flying the A-7 with a worldwide operational commitment. The unit was redesignated the 357th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron in July 1976 with A-7 pilot training as its mission.

In October 1979, the squadron began flying the A-10. In November 1991, the Dragons were

redesignated the 357th Fighter Squadron, and assigned to the newly activated 355th Operations Group in May 1992. In January 1993, the 357th expanded its mission to include A/OA-10, with its A-10 mission.

Squadron Aces

LTC John L. Elder Jr 8.0 Kills

Maj Henry S. Billie 6.0 Kills

Maj Fred R. Haviland Jr 6.0 Kills

Cpt Norman E Olson 6.0 Kills

Cpt Leslie D. Minchew 5.5 Kills

Cpt William J. Cullerton 5.0 Kills

The 357th TFS activated with A-7Ds as part of the 355th TFW in July, 1971. The squadron's A-7s originally wore DC tail codes and were later changed to DM. On July 1, 1976, the squadron was redesignated the 357th TFTS, and in April, 1979 began transition to the A-10. On November 1, 1991, the squadron was redesignated the 357th FS, and became one of the A/OA-10 Formal training Units (FTUs). Wearing DM tail codes, the original squadron tail marking was a yellow fin tip with black lightning bolt, by 1990, the design was changed to a yellow fin band with a black dragons head.

Deactivation of the 80th Air Depot Wing at Nouasseur Air Base on June 8, 1953, and activation of the 7280th Air Depot Wing to take its place had no effect on the command or organizational structure. Like so many military unit redesignations, it seemed to serve no purpose except to give the unit a different number, and perhaps a new image. Brig. General James L. Jackson had assumed command of the 80th Air Depot Wing from Brig. General Wilfred Hardy a week earlier. The air depot became responsible for logistic support of Wheelus Air Base in Libya and Dhahran Air Base in Saudia Arabia. The next month the Leghorn, Italy, supply depot would also be added to the 7280th Air Depot Wing logistic support responsibility. Another unit for the 7280th Air Depot Wing to support logistically, the 357th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) arrived at Nouasseur Air Base in late June, 1953, with F-86 aircraft. Now two USAF fighter interceptor squadrons were in French Morocco as a part of the newly formed Air Defense Division (Provisional), and the 17th Air Force

Part of he 357th was at Takhli RTAFB on temporary duty when the 355th TFW was assigned there PCS. By the beginning of February 1966, the rest had arrived and were checked out to assist the massive wing effort aimed at destroying the North Vietnamese ability to wage war.

Diving through flak considered to be the worst in world history, the squadron bombed railyards, storage areas, iron and steel foundaries, and other vital targets in the Hanoi/Haiphong area.

To carry the load of 16 to 20 sorties per day, the number of "Dragons" increased from 22 to 32 pilots. Several "Bears" (Electronic Warfare Officers) were added as the squadron received the Wild Weasel aircraft in 1967.

Like the 354th TFS, the Licking Dragons also had a Medal of Honor winner of their own, although it took till 1973 for Major Leo K. Thorsness to receive this highest U.S. Military award. Shot down on 30 April 1967, he and his backseater, Capt. Harold E. Johnson, spent the remainder of the war as POWs.

After the 1968 bombing halt, the emphasis of the war shifted to Forward Air Controller (FAC) oriented strikes. Although less impressive targets, the narrow mountain roads and forest covered supply dumps in other parts of SEA were just as vital as those in the North, and in many ways more challenging. The pilots of the 357th flew missions in support of U.S. troops in contact. Supply trucks and the roads that let them through the rugged mountains and jungles became common targets. The "M in the River" and the "Dog's Head" became the new land marks for the Dragons. The names "Bird's Head" and the "H" came to mean flak as heavy as was ever seen anywhere but downtown Hanoi.

A-10C pilots from the 357th Fighter Squadron conducted austere operations training, operating from a dry lakebed at Fort Irwin, Calif., late last month. "This capability can be vital ... at locations and environments where US and coalition forces have a very limited footprint," said Maj. Mark Malan, a 357th FS pilot from Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. "The A-10 was specifically designed with a more robust landing gear system to handle the stress" and is the only fighter-type aircraft in the Air Force capable of operating from unimproved strips, he added. "We maintain a unique capability to operate and integrate in a forward-deployed austere location," but A-10 pilots seldom have the opportunity to practice the skill. Controllers with the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron deployed from JB Lewis-McChord, Wash., for Exercise Green Flag West managed lakebed flight operations, affording three pilots the opportunity to certify on rough-field operations on Sept. 22. Unit A-10s took part in a similar event in January. 2015

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 10 Nov 2010

Updated: 7 May 2018

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.