

51 OPERATIONS GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

51 Pursuit Group (Interceptor) established, 20 Nov 1940
Activated, 15 Jan 1941
Redesignated 51 Pursuit Group (Fighter), 12 Mar 1941
Redesignated 51 Fighter Group, 15 May 1942
Inactivated, 13 Dec 1945
Activated, 15 Oct 1946
Redesignated 51 Fighter Interceptor Group, 1 Feb 1950
Inactivated, 25 Oct 1957
Redesignated 51 Tactical Fighter Group, 31 Jul 1985
Redesignated 51 Fighter Group, 10 Sep 1990
Activated, 1 Oct 1990
Redesignated 51 Operations Group, 7 Feb 1992

STATIONS

Hamilton Field, CA, 15 Jan 1941
March Field, CA, 20 Jun 1941-11 Jan 1942
Karachi, India, 14 Mar 1942
Dinjan, India, 10 Oct 1942
Kunming, China, 2 Oct 1943
India, Sep-16 Nov 1945
Ft Lewis, WA, 12-13 Dec 1945
Yontan Adrm, Okinawa, 15 Oct 1946

Naha Afld (later, Naha AB), Okinawa, 22 May 1947
Itazuke AB, Japan, 22 Sep 1950
Kimpoo AB, South Korea, 24 Oct 1950
Itazuke AB, Japan, 3 Jan 1951
Tsuiki AB, Japan, 22 Jan 1951
Suwon AB, South Korea, 31 Jul 1951
Naha AB, Okinawa, 1 Aug 1954-25 Oct 1957
Osan AB, South Korea, 1 Oct 1990

ASSIGNMENTS

Southwest Air District (later, 4 Air Force), 15 Jan 1941
9 Pursuit Wing, 2 Jun 1941
4 Bomber Command, 19 Sep 1941-Jan 1942
10 (later, Tenth) Air Force, c. 14 Mar 1942
Fourteenth Air Force, 12 Sep 1943
69 Bombardment (later, 69 Composite) Wing, Oct 1943
Fourteenth Air Force, 25 Aug 1945
Army Air Forces, India-Burma Theater, Sep-Nov 1945
301 Fighter Wing, 15 Oct 1946
51 Fighter (later, 51 Fighter-Interceptor) Wing, 18 Aug 1948-25 Oct 1957
51 Tactical Fighter (later, 51 Wing; 51 Fighter) Wing, 1 Oct 1990

ATTACHMENTS

4 Air Force
4 Interceptor Command, 14 Oct 1941-unkn
Tenth Air Force until 1 Oct 1943
8 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 26 Sep-12 Oct 1950
Detachment 1, Twentieth Air Force, 16 Aug 1954-1 Mar 1955
Detachment 1, 313th Air Division, 1-15 Mar 1955

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-40, 1941-1945
P-38, 1943-1945
P-51, 1944-1945
P-47, 1946-1947
F-80, 1947-1951
F-61, 1947-1950
F-82, 1949-1950
F-86, 1951-1957
F-94, 1954
F-16, 1990
OA-10, 1990
C-12, 1992
HH-60, 1993-1995

A-10, 1998

COMMANDERS

Col Homer L. Sanders, Jun 1941
Lt Col McElroy (acting), 9 Apr 1942
Col Homer L. Sanders, 25 Apr 1942
Lt Col John E. Barr (acting), 27 May 1942
Col Homer L. Sanders, 14 Jul 1942
Col John F. Egan, 23 Mar 1943
Lt Col David W. Wallace, 15 Sep 1943
Col Samuel B. Knowles Jr., 20 Sep 1943
Maj Howard T. Wright (acting), 12 Dec 1943
Col Samuel B. Knowles Jr., 24 Dec 1943
Lt Col Robert L. Liles (acting), 31 Mar 1944
Col Samuel B. Knowles Jr., 9 Apr 1944
Col Louis R. Hughes Jr., 27 May 1944
Lt Col John C. Habecker, 15 Feb 1945
Lt Col William E. Blankenship, c. 22 Feb 1945
Col Edmund P. Gaines, 4 Apr 1945
Lt Col William E. Blankenship, c. Sep-13 Dec 1945
Col Loring F. Stetson Jr., 15 Oct 1946
Col Homer A. Boushey, 12 Apr 1947
Lt Col James F. McCarthy, 1 Aug 1947
Col Homer A. Boushey, 1947
Lt Col Bruce D. Biddlecome, Jun 1948
Lt Col Kenneth L. Garrett, 7 Mar 1949
Lt Col Robert F. Worley, 24 May 1949
Col John T. Shields, 1 Jul 1949
Lt Col Irwin H. Dregne, Jun 1950
Col Oliver G. Cellini, c. 25 Jul 1950
Lt Col Irwin H. Dregne, 7 Nov 1950
Col Oliver G. Cellini, 16 Dec 1950
Col Irwin H. Dregne, 24 Apr 1951
Lt Col John M. Thacker, 21 Jul 1951
Lt Col George L. Jones, 13 Nov 1951
Lt Col William M. Shelton, c. 17 Mar 1952
Lt Col Albert S. Kelly, Jun 1952
Col Robert P. Baldwin, Jan 1953
Lt Col Harold C. Gibson, Aug 1953
Col Malcolm E. Norton, Oct 1953
Lt Col Harold G. Shook, 23 Mar 1954
Col Paulett Spivey, 22 May 1954
Lt Col Harold G. Shook, 24 Jun 1954
Lt Col William A. Campbell, 9 Jul 1954

Col George V. Williams, 10 Aug 1954
Lt Col Donald V. Miller (acting), 26 Aug 1955
Col George V. Williams, 17 Oct 1955
Col Robert L. Cardenas, 2 Jul 1956
Lt Col George C. Farr, 4 May 1957-unkn
Col Raymond L. Head Jr., c. 1 Oct 1990
Col Hugh C. Cameron, 18 Jun 1991
Col Michael P. O'Conner, 2 Aug 1993
Col Bob D. DuLaney, 10 Jul 1995
Col Thomas Poulos Jr., 18 Jul 1997
Col Lawrence Wells, 25 Jun 1999
Col Paul K. White, 6 Jul 2001
Col Mark A. Bucknam, 8 Aug 2003
Col Terry M. Featherson, 29 Jul 2005
Col Michael E. Newman, 13 Aug 2007
Col Bruce T. Desautels, 4 Aug 2009
Col Keith D. McBride, 29 Jul 2011
Col James D. Clark, 7 Jun 2013

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
India-Burma
China Defensive
China Offensive

Korea
UN Offensive
CCF Intervention
First UN Counteroffensive
CCF Spring Offensive
UN Summer-Fall Offensive
Second Korean Winter
Korea, Summer-Fall 1952
Third Korean Winter
Korea, Summer 1953

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Korea, 28 Nov 1951-30 Apr 1952

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Oct 1992-30 Sep 1994

1 Nov 1995-31 May 1997

1 Oct 2002-30 Sep 2004

1 Oct 2007-30 Sep 2009; 1 Oct 2010-30 Sep 2012

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations

[22] Sep 1950-30 Jun 1951

1 Jul 1951-31 Mar 1953

EMBLEM

51 Fighter Group emblem: Per fess nebuly abased azure and or, issuing from partition line a demi-pegasus argent with a machine gun in each wing bendwise sable, gun fire proper.(Approved 5 Feb 1942. This emblem was modified 2 May 1956.)



51 Fighter Interceptor Group patches

51 Operations Group emblem: Per fess nebuly abased Azure and Or, issuing from partition line a demi-Pegasus Argent with a machine gun in each wing bendwise Sable, gun fire Proper, all within a diminished bordure of the second. Attached below the base, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "51 OPERATIONS GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue represents the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. A nebuly line of partition divides the shield and represents clouds. Pegasus, the mythological winged horse, is shown in an attitude of flight, rising to the sky, deftly and swiftly with a flaming machine gun in each wing to accomplish the mission assigned successfully.

MOTTO

Deftly And Swiftly

OPERATIONS

During 1941, trained in the United States for fighter operations The 51 Pursuit Group (F) GHQ Air Force was activated January 15, 1941, at Hamilton Field, California, and, as child of its famous parent, the 20th Pursuit Group, looked to that outfit for most of its officers and enlisted personnel.

Only four officers and 150 men were charter members of the Group with Captain Jasper N. Durham as Group Commander and Commanding Officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. Second Lieutenant Lowell W. Goddard commanded the 16th Pursuit Squadron and was also Group Adjutant, while First Lieutenant E. H. Tolan commanded the 25th Pursuit Squadron and First Lieutenant C. W. Dunning commanded the 26 Pursuit Squadron.

After three months of "papers" organization, Major Homer L. "Tex" Sanders was given command of the Group and later, when the personnel was increased by 15 new officers and almost 150 men, outsiders began to realize that the "Fighting 51" was growing up.



Col Homer L. Sanders

On June 10, 1941, the Group was transferred to March Field where it became a unit of the Ninth Pursuit Wing and began to form a compact organization.

From a child the Group is now growing into young manhood and its right arm is growing in strength in proportion to its age. There is no glorious history to look backwards on, but a splendid future lies to the fore and both officers and enlisted men feel that they are going to be proud some day to say they belonged to the "Fighting 51."

After the Pearl Harbor attack of 7 Dec 1941, served as part of the defense force for the west coast.

Moved to India via Australia and Ceylon, Jan-Mar 1942. Defended the Indian terminus of the "Hump" airlift route over the Himalaya Mountains between India and China and airfields in that area. Flew strafing, bombing, reconnaissance, and patrol missions in support of Allied ground troops during a Japanese offensive in northern Burma in 1943. After moving to China in Oct 1943, defended the Chinese end of the Hump route and air bases in the Kunming area. Attached Japanese shipping in the Red River delta of Indochina and supported Chinese ground forces in their late 1944 drive along the Salween River. Inactivated after returning to India and then the United States in the autumn of 1945.

Between 1946 and 1950, trained and served as part of the occupation force and provided air defense for Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands.

Flew armed reconnaissance and close air support missions over Korea from Japan, Sep-Oct 1950 and from South Korea Oct 1950-Jan 1951, when it moved back to Japan. The group continued to fly combat missions over Korea, staging through air bases at Taegu and Suwon. Flew air support, patrol, escort, interdiction, and reconnaissance missions, frequently engaging enemy jet fighters in air-to-air combat.

After the Korean armistice on 27 Jul 1953, the group remained on alert, flew patrol missions, and participated in air defense exercises. After returning to Okinawa in Aug 1954, resumed air defense missions over the Ryukyu Islands.

Frequently deployed squadrons to Taiwan and the Philippines on alert and air defense exercises. Became non-operational on 1 Jul 1957 and remained so until inactivation on 25 Oct 1957.

Since 1990, trained and took part in a series of exercises to maintain combat readiness for the air defense of South Korea.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Unit yearbook. *March Field Air Base, CA, 1941*. Army and Navy Publishing Co. Inc. Baton Rouge, LA. 1941.