

## 55<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

55<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron constituted, 9 Aug 1917  
Redesignated 467<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron, 1 Feb 1918  
Demobilized, 16 Mar 1919  
Reconstituted and redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron, 24 Mar 1923  
Activated, 15 Nov 1930  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Fighter), 6 Dec 1939  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor), 12 Mar 1941  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (Twin Engine), 30 Dec 1942  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Twin Engine, 20 Aug 1943  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 5 Sep 1944  
Inactivated, 18 Oct 1945  
Activated, 29 Jul 1946  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Jet, 15 Jun 1948  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Squadron, 20 Jan 1950  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8 Jul 1958  
Redesignated 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1991  
Inactivated, 30 Dec 1993  
Activated, 1 Jan 1994

### STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX, 9 Aug 1917  
Hazelhurst Field, NY, 21 Sep–13 Oct 1917  
Issoudun, France, 4 Nov 1917  
St Jean-de-Monts, France, 16 May 1918  
Latrecey, France, 6 Nov 1918–8 Feb 1919  
Garden City, NY, 4–16 Mar 1919  
Mather Field, CA, 15 Nov 1930  
Barksdale Field, LA, 31 Oct 1932  
Moffett Field, CA, 19 Nov 1939  
Hamilton Field, CA, 9 Sep 1940  
Wilmington, NC, c. 22 Feb 1942  
Morris Field, NC, 23 Apr 1942  
Drew Field, FL, 7 Aug 1942  
Paine Field, WA, 30 Sep 1942  
March Field, CA, c. 1 Jan–11 Aug 1943  
Wittering, England, c. 27 Aug 1943  
Kings Cliffe, England, Apr 1944–11 Oct 1945  
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 16–18 Oct 1945  
Biggs Field, TX, 29 Jul 1946  
Shaw Field (later, AFB), SC, 25 Oct 1946  
Langley AFB, VA, 19 Nov 1951–22 May 1952  
Wethersfield, England, 1 Jun 1952  
Sculthorpe, England, 9 Aug 1955  
Wethersfield, England, 27 Apr 1956  
RAF Upper Heyford, England, 1 Jun 1970–30 Dec 1993  
Shaw AFB, SC, 1 Jan 1994

#### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Incirlik AB, Turkey, 31 Aug–23 Oct 1990

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Unkn, 9 Aug–Nov 1917  
Third Aviation Instruction Center, Nov 1917  
Aerial Gunnery School, May 1918  
2<sup>nd</sup> Air Depot, Nov 1918–Feb 1919  
Unkn, Feb–16 Mar 1919  
2<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment Wing, 15 Nov 1930  
8<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Group, 1 Apr 1931  
20<sup>th</sup> Pursuit (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter) Group, 15 Jun 1932–18 Oct 1945  
20<sup>th</sup> Fighter (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber) Group, 29 Jul 1946  
20<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber (later, 20<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter) Wing, 8 Feb 1955  
20<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 31 Mar 1992–30 Dec 1993  
20<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 1 Jan 1994

## **ATTACHMENTS**

20<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Group

20<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Group

20<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber Wing, 15 Nov 1952–7 Feb 1955

39<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Group, 31 Aug–23 Oct 1990

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-12, 1930–1935

P-12B

P-12E

DH-4 1931

P-26, 1934–1938

P-26A

P-36, 1938–1940

P-36A

P-40, 1940–1942

P-40D

P-40E

P-40F

P-40G

P-39, 1942–1943

P-39D

P-39F

P-39L

P-38, 1943–1944

P-38D

P-38G

P-38H

P-38J

P-51, 1944–1945

P-51C

P-51D

P-51, 1946–1948

F-84, 1948–1957

F-84D

F-84E

F-84G

F-100, 1957–1971

F-111, 1971

F-111E

A-10

OA-10

F-16

F-16C

F-16D

### **COMMANDERS**

Cpt Gustave G. Baetcke, 25 Aug 1917-16 Mar 1919  
1Lt Clarence E. Crumrine, 15 Nov 1930  
Cpt Harold L. Cloke, 1 Feb 1933  
1Lt Clarence E. Crumrine, 24 Jun 1933  
1Lt Hilbert M. Wittkop, 7 Jul 1934  
1Lt Earl W. Barnes, 23 Jul 1934  
Cpt Armin F. Herold, 29 Mar 1935  
Cpt Morris R. Nelson 7 Oct 1936  
Cpt Homer L. Sanders 1 Jun 1939  
1Lt Avelin P. Tacon Jr.,  
Maj Paul Lobingier, Oct 1942  
Maj David R. McGovern, 1943  
Maj Frank C. Clark, 29 Dec 1943  
Maj Donald H. McAuley, 8 Mar 1944  
LTC Cy Wilson, 29 Apr 1944  
LTC Martin L. Low, 25 Jun 1944  
Maj Richard P. Gatterdam, 6 Dec 1944  
Maj Jack C. Price, 23 Mar 1945  
Maj Maurice C. Cristadoro Jr., 4 Apr 1945-unkn  
LTC Franklin A. Nichols, 29 Jul 1946  
Maj John M. Winkler, Sep 1946  
LTC Alfred J. Ball, 30 Oct 1946  
LTC Richard Cline, 8 Jan 1947  
LTC Francis S. Gabreski, Apr 1947  
Maj James C. Hare, 4 Aug 1947  
LTC Melvin J. Neilson, Sep 1947  
Maj Harold A. Lind (temporary), 5 May 1948  
LTC Elmer E. McTaggart, 21 Jun 1948  
Maj Harold A. Lind, (temporary), Jul 1948  
Maj Charles W. Lasko (temporary), Aug 1948  
LTC Elmer E. McTaggart, Sep 1948  
Maj Charles W. Lasko, Oct 1948  
Col Gilbert O. Waymond Jr., Apr 1949  
Maj Charles W. Lasko, May 1949  
LTC William L. Mitchell Jr., 1950  
LTC Joseph A. Hagemann, 24 Jul 1951  
Maj John S. Bradley, 6 Aug 1954  
Maj John J. Kropenick, 10 Mar 1955  
Maj Max T. Beall, c. 1 May 1956  
Col Michael C. McCarthy, 15 Jun 1956  
LTC Charles L. Miller, 15 Mar 1957

LTC Raymond L. Flint, 2 Nov 1957  
LTC Raymond R. Stewart, 1 Jan 1959  
Maj Tony M. Greget, 22 Jun 1961  
Maj Walter P. Paluch Jr., 30 Jun 1963  
Col Ivan H. Dethman, 22 Jul 1964  
LTC Robert L. Jones, 8 Jul 1966  
LTC Richard B. Davis, 10 May 1967  
Maj Lawrence W. Whitford, 13 Jun 1968  
Maj Donald G. Duff, 12 Sep 1968  
LTC George G. Yeager, 1 Nov 1968  
LTC Elwood L. Sanders, 30 Dec 1969  
LTC Kenneth T. Blank, Jan 1971  
LTC Harris J. Taylor, 27 Aug 1971  
LTC Charles A. Herning (acting), 17 Sep 1972  
LTC George W. Kronsbein Jr., 29 Nov 1972  
LTC James S. Walbridge, Jul 1973  
LTC William K. James, 1 Dec 1975  
LTC William E. Pickens III, 29 Jun 1977  
LTC Albert S. Dodd III, 12 Jun 1979  
LTC John H. Wambough Jr., 26 May 1981  
LTC Donald D. Henry, Oct 1981  
LTC Danny D. Howard, 24 Feb 1983  
LTC Gary A. Voellger, 22 Feb 1985  
LTC James W. Savage Jr., 15 Nov 1986  
LTC Robert D. Balph II, 30 Sep 1988  
LTC John W. Dorough Jr., 25 Sep 1989  
LTC Terry L. Simpson, 2 Nov 1990  
LTC Daniel C. Clark, 11 Sep 1992  
LTC Kenneth D. Holder, 15 Jul 1993  
None, not manned, 15 Oct-30 Dec 1993  
LTC John A. Neubauer, 1 Jan 1994  
LTC Timothy B. Vigil, 4 Aug 1995  
None, not manned, 3 Jul 1996-6 Jul 1997  
LTC Maurice H. Forsyth, 7 Jul 1997  
LTC Robert D. Harvey, 10 Jul 1998  
LTC James N. Post III, 19 May 2000  
LTC John K Forsythe Jr., 28 Jun 2002  
LTC John P. Montgomery, 27 Jun 2003  
LTC David C. Hathaway, 3 Jun 2005  
LTC Miles A. DeMayo, 22 Jun 2007  
LTC Douglas D. DeMaio, 2 Mar 2009  
LTC Michael K. Schnabel, 10 Dec 2010  
LTC Christopher A. Claus, 15 Jun 2012  
LTC Michael G. Horlbeck, 10 Jan 2014

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

World War I Theater of Operations

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

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation

Central Germany, 8 Apr 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1956–30 Sep 1957

1 May 1963–31 Dec 1964

1 Jan 1965–31 Mar 1966

1 Jul 1968–31 Mar 1970

1 Sep 1970–30 Jun 1972

31 Mar 1973–30 Jun 1974

1 Jul 1977–30 Jun 1979

1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1983

1 Jul 1987–30 Jun 1989

1 Jul 1990–30 Jun 1992

1 Oct 1992–15 Oct 1993

1 Jan–31 Dec 1994

1 Jul 1997–31 May 1999

1 Jun 1999–31 May 2001

## EMBLEM

55<sup>th</sup> PS



~1930 - 1932

55<sup>th</sup> PS & FS



1932 - 1991

55<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron emblem: On a yellow disk bordered in blue, placed insaltire and interlaced with a blue annulet a winged arrow point up and a winged sword point down, both black with that portion on the border yellow. The yellow disk and blue border represent the sun and sky, and the winged arrow the fast rate of climb of a plane starting into the sky, passing through the sun's rays and again into the sky. The winged sword symbolizes power and destruction, and with the point placed downward, denotes the pursuit plane's method of launching an attack. The annulet interlaced with the sword and arrow produces a fret, which signifies unity. The colors are those of the Air Corps. (Approved, 4 May 1932)





55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron emblem: Azure, a pair of die in perspective Argent shaded Silver Gray, each showing "five" in the obverse, Sable, the shaded sides of the die showing "six" to base and "four" to chief of the last, each within a five of the numeral "55," its' top bars as stylized wings Argent, all within a diminished bordure Or. Attached above the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "55TH FIGHTER SQ" in Yellow letters. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "FIGHTING FIFTY FIFTH " in Yellow letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** 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 winged designation represents rapid flight while carrying dice, signifying the risks involved in aerial combat. (Adopted 1952 and approved in Jul 1991)

**MOTTO**

**NICKNAME**



## FIGHTING FIFTY FIFTH

### **OPERATIONS**

Constructed and maintained facilities (after 6 Nov 1918 in Zone of Advance), Nov 1917–Dec 1918.

Demobilized on 16 March 1919 at Garden City, NY, as the 467th Aero Squadron. Reconstituted in the Regular Army on 24 March 1923 as the 55th Pursuit Squadron and assigned to the 16th Pursuit Group. Designated Active Associate was the 50th Observation Squadron 1923-27. Allotted to the Third Corps Area on 28 February 1927. Withdrawn from the Third Corps Area on 1 September 1928 and allotted to the Eighth Corps Area. Concurrently, relieved from assignment to the 16th Pursuit Group and assigned to the 8th Pursuit Group. Kelly Field, TX, designated as headquarters location on organization, but the unit was never organized at that location. Activated on 15 November 1930 at Mather Field, CA. Relieved from assignment to the 8th Pursuit Group on 15 June 1932 and assigned to the 20th Pursuit Group. Transferred on 31 October 1932 to Barksdale Field, LA. Transferred on 19 November 1939 to Moffett Field, CA. Redesignated as the 55th Pursuit Squadron (Fighter) on 6 December 1939. Awarded the Frank Luke Trophy for 1940. Transferred on 9 September 1940 to Hamilton Field, CA. Redesignated as the 55th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) on 12 March 1941.

At the beginning of World War II, the 55th sent its people to units fighting overseas and continued to train aviators for squadrons in Europe and the Pacific. In May 1942, it was redesignated a fighter squadron and transitioned to the P-39, operating from several locations in the United States before acquiring P-38.

The 55th was in the skies over Europe by August 1943, operating from Royal Air Force Wittering, England. The squadron flew 175 combat missions with the Lightning before acquiring the P-51 (F-6) Mustang in 1944. With the rest of the 20th Fighter Group, the 55th flew daily strafing, long-range-patrol and bomber-escort missions. In June, they provided air cover during the massive allied invasion at Normandy.

As the war progressed, the 55th performed escort and fighter-bomber missions supporting the Allied advance through Central Europe and the Rhineland. In December 1945, they took part in the Battle of the Bulge, escorting bombers to the battle area. The squadron's 175th and last combat mission in the P-51 was flown in April 1945, the day after American and Soviet forces met at the Elbe River. The 55th was demobilized Oct. 18, 1945, after the war's end, but was reactivated July 29, 1946, at Biggs Field, Texas, flying air power demonstrations and training operations in the P-51.

The 55th entered the jet age in February 1948, with the F-84G. In January 1950, it was redesignated the 55th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. The squadron returned to England at RAF Wethersfield in June 1952. The squadron transitioned to the F-100 in 1957 and in 1958 was redesignated the 55th Tactical Fighter Squadron.

The 55th moved with the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing to RAF Upper Heyford in June 1970. The next April, the 55th received its first F-111E, becoming fully operational in November. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the 55th participated in countless North Atlantic Treaty Organization and U.S. exercises and operations, which directly contributed to containment of Soviet threats to Europe.

In January 1991, elements of the 55th deployed to Turkey during Operation Desert Storm. They flew more than 144 sorties, amassing 415 combat hours without a loss.

In May 1992, the 55th Fighter Squadron deployed to Aviano, Italy for Dragon Hammer '92.

The 55th Fighter Squadron deployed 6 aircraft to Incirlik AB, Turkey, for Dynamic Guard '93, from 20 September - 8 October 1993. This was the last operational deployment for the 20th Fighter Wing while at RAF Upper Heyford.

The last of the wing's three aircraft departed Upper Heyford on 7 December 1993. The flagship of the 55th Fighter Squadron, aircraft 68055 Heartbreaker, departed first. It went to Robins AFB, Georgia, where it is now on display. The next aircraft, 68-061 The Last Roll of Me Dice, departed for the Davis Monthan AFB 'boneyard'. Finally, aircraft 68-020 The Chief, flew to Hill AFB, Utah, where it is now on display at the Hill AFB Aerospace Museum.

In the summer of 2000, the 55th deployed to Southwest Asia for Operation Northern Watch. It followed that deployment with Operation Southern Watch in the fall of 2001, and in the winter of 2002, deployed again in support of ONW.

On 5 April 2006, at 1737 hours local time, while performing Basic Fighter Maneuvers (BFM), the mishap pilot (MP) ejected from the mishap aircraft (MA), F-16CJ, Serial Number 93-0542. The MP and MA were assigned to the 55th FS, Shaw AFB, SC. The MP suffered major injuries during the high speed ejection. The MA impacted the Atlantic Ocean 86 miles northeast of Charleston, SC, and was destroyed. There were no fatalities or civilian property damage.

Mishap cost is estimated at \$22,861,354. During the mishap engagement, the MP initiated an 8-9 G descending left turn in order to maintain an offensive advantage over the mishap instructor pilot (MIP). At 20 seconds into the engagement, the MIP observed the MA stabilize in a 60 degree nose low attitude with 45-70 degrees of left bank. Within seconds of making a "knock it off" radio call to the MP, the MIP observed the MP eject from the MA. The MP remembered waking up, seeing the ocean directly in front of him, feeling like the aircraft was at an extremely high speed based on wind noise over the canopy and pulling the ejection handle. The observations by the MIP and testimony of the MP are consistent with a G-LOC in which the pilot loses consciousness, ceases to control the aircraft, and then regains limited consciousness after a short period of total incapacitation.

Ejection was initiated at 6720 feet Mean Sea Level, approximately 80 degrees nose low, 656 knots with a descent rate of 1100 feet/second. The MA impacted the water and was destroyed. The MP was located by a joint US Air Force/US Navy/US Coast Guard rescue operation and recovered by the US Navy's USS Klakring approximately two hours after the ejection.

The AIB President found clear and convincing evidence that the MP suffered G-induced loss of consciousness (G-LOC) that resulted in what the MP correctly assessed as an unrecoverable aircraft attitude based on his diminished cognitive capability. The MP initiated a high speed ejection sustaining major injuries and the MA impacted the ocean and was destroyed.

The AIB President found substantial evidence that an extended break from flying to attend a formal military school, physical fatigue from flying five (5) high-G BFM sorties in three (3) days, and the mental stressors associated with beginning the Instructor Pilot Upgrade (IPUG) were contributing factors to the MP's G-LOC.

On 12 November 2008, an F-16C aircraft, serial number 93-0554, on takeoff roll and during initiation of afterburner, experienced a catastrophic engine failure and aircraft fire. The Mishap Aircraft (MA) was deployed from the 20th Fighter Wing and assigned to the 55th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, 332d Air Expeditionary Wing, Balad Air Base, Iraq. The MA was part of a two-ship close air support mission in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

During takeoff roll, the Mishap Pilot (MP) selected MIL power and observed normal aircraft operations and flight instrument indications. Shortly after selecting afterburner, the MP heard a loud pop, saw a bright light directly behind the cockpit and experienced an immediate loss of thrust. The MP initiated the appropriate critical action procedures and aborted the takeoff. The aircraft departed the runway near the approach end barrier at 1,800 feet and continued traveling forward and to the right. After traveling an additional 900 feet, the nose landing gear collapsed and the MA came to complete stop. After the MA came to a complete stop, the MP safely ground egressed from the MA and sustained no injuries.

After the MP's safe egress, fire engulfed the MA and some of the loaded munitions discharged. The MA was destroyed as the result of the fire, sustaining a total loss of approximately \$28.9 million. The fire was extinguished without injury to personnel or damage to equipment. The mishap caused no damage to private or other military property.

The Accident Investigation Board President found by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of this mishap was a catastrophic failure of the engine's second stage fan disk. An undetected subsurface crack in the second stage fan disk caused a portion of the fan disk to break free shortly after the MP selected afterburner. There are no required inspections that would have detected the subsurface crack. Pieces of the fan disk and other engine fragments pierced the aircraft fuel cell and severed hydraulic lines, causing loss of control and the fire that destroyed the aircraft.

Landing Gear Collapse Caused F-16 Mishap at Osan The collapse of the right main landing gear caused an F-16C to skid off the runway and crash immediately after landing on July 16 at Osan AB, South Korea, announced Air Combat Command. Several seconds after departing the runway, the F-16's nose landing gear also collapsed, causing the aircraft to flip and roll, states ACC's Nov. 5 release, which cites the findings of the command's accident investigation board report. The F-16, deployed to Osan from Shaw AFB, S.C., was returning to base after completing a training mission when the mishap occurred. The pilot, a member of Shaw's 55th Fighter Squadron, did not eject and sustained a minor back injury; he was able to exit the aircraft, after which emergency responders transported him for medical care, according to the release. The accident investigators determined that installation of an incorrect pivot pin in the toggle-and-

link assembly in the right main landing gear allowed the assembly to come unlocked, leading to the collapse. The loss of the F-16 is valued at approximately \$33.5 million, according to ACC. 2013

An F-16 assigned to the 20th Fighter Wing at Shaw AFB, S.C., collided with a Cessna 150 around 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, approximately 11 miles north of Charleston. Maj. Aaron Johnson, the F-16 pilot from the 55th Fighter Squadron, "survived the collision by ejecting from his fighter. He was transported to the medical clinic at JB Charleston, S.C., "for examination. 2015

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Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 9 Nov 2010

Updated: 5 Sep 2016

#### Sources

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

USAF Accident Investigation Board Reports.

Unit yearbook. *10th Pursuit Wing and 45th Air Base. USAAC Hamilton Field, CA. 1941*