

## 56 FIGHTER WING



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

56 Fighter Wing, established, 28 Jul 1947  
Organized, 15 Aug 1947  
Redesignated 56 Fighter Interceptor Wing, 20 Jan 1950  
Inactivated, 6 Feb 1952  
Redesignated 56 Fighter Wing (Air Defense) and activated, 28 Dec 1960  
Organized, 1 Feb 1961  
Discontinued and inactivated, 1 Jan 1964  
Redesignated 56 Air Commando Wing and activated, 16 Mar 1967  
Organized, 8 Apr 1967  
Redesignated 56 Special Operations Wing, 1 Aug 1968  
Redesignated 56 Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Jun 1975  
Redesignated 56 Tactical Training Wing, 1 Oct 1981  
Redesignated 56 Fighter Wing, 1 Oct 1991

#### STATIONS

Selfridge Field (later, AFB), Michigan, 15 Aug 1947-6 Feb 1952  
K.I. Sawyer AFB, Michigan, 1 Feb 1961-1 Jan 1964  
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 8 Apr 1967-30 Jun 1975  
MacDill AFB, Florida, 30 Jun 1975  
Luke AFB, Arizona, 1 Apr 1994

#### ASSIGNMENTS

Fifteenth Air Force, 15 Aug 1947  
Strategic Air Command, 1 Oct 1947  
Tenth Air Force, 1 Dec 1948  
Eastern Air Defense Force, 1 Sep 1950-6 Feb 1952  
Air Defense Command, 28 Dec 1960  
Sault Sainte Marie Air Defense Sector, 1 Feb 1961  
Duluth Air Defense Sector, 1 Oct 1963-1 Jan 1964  
Pacific Air Forces, 16 Mar 1967  
Thirteenth Air Force, 8 Apr 1967  
Ninth Air Force, 30 Jun 1975  
Nineteenth Air Force, 1 Apr 1994

### **ATTACHMENTS**

26 Air Division [Defense], 10 Dec 1949-19 Feb 1950  
30 Air Division [Defense], 20 Feb 1950-30 Air Division [Defense] to 6 Feb 1952  
Seventh Air Force, 8 Apr 1967-26 Feb 1974  
United States Support Activities Group/ Seventh Air Force, 27 Feb 1974-30 Jun 1975

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P (later, F)-80, 1947-1950  
F-86, 1950-1952  
F-47, 1951-1952  
F-51, 1951-1952  
F-94, 1951-1952  
F-101, 1961-1963  
A-1, 1967-1972  
A-26, 1967-1969  
CH-3, 1967-1972  
C-123, 1967-1971  
T-28, 1967-1973  
RT-28, 1967-1972  
U-6, 1967  
U-10, 1967-1969  
UC-123, 1968-1971  
C-47, 1969-1972  
CH-53, 1970-1975  
QU-22, 1970-1972  
AC-119, 1971-1972  
EC-47, 1972-1974  
H-34, 1972  
OV-10, 1972-1975  
O-1, 1973  
F-4, 1975-1982  
F-16, 1980

F-35, 2014

## **COMMANDERS**

Col William T. Hudnell, 15 Aug 1947  
Lt Col David T. Mcknight, Jun 1949  
Col James R. Gunn Jr., 23 Aug 1949  
Col George S. Brown, 15 Aug 1951-6 Feb 1952  
None (Not Manned), 28 Dec 1960-31 Jan 1961  
Col James F. Reed, 1 Feb 1961  
Col John M. Konosky, 16 May 1963-1 Jan 1964  
None (Not Manned), 16 Mar-7 Apr 1967  
Col Harry C. Aderholt, 8 Apr 1967  
Col Roland K. Mccoskrie, 19 Nov 1967  
Col Edwin J. White Jr., 7 Nov 1968  
Col Patrick M. Fallon, 31 May 1969  
Col Edwin J. White Jr., By 18 Jun 1969  
Col Samuel E. Crosby Jr., 5 Oct 1969  
Col Edward J. Walsh Jr., 8 Aug 1970  
Col Jack E. Robinson, 15 Jul 1971  
Col Norbert L. Simon, 17 Jun 1972  
Col Robert E. Wayne, 1 Dec 1972  
Col William B. Owens, 30 Jun 1973  
Col Ralph H. Bowersox, 15 Sep 1973  
Col Charles E. Woods, 26 Sep 1973  
Col Perry J. Dahl, 15 Jul 1974  
Col Harry A. Goodall, 3 Feb 1975  
Col Gerald J. Carey Jr., 30 Jun 1975  
Col Ernest A. Bedke, 11 Aug 1975  
Col Charles J. Cunningham Jr., 4 Nov 1977  
Col Henry D. Canterbury, 7 Jul 1979  
Col Henry Viccellio Jr., 15 Jan 1982  
Col Ronald R. Fogleman, 4 Mar 1983  
Col Jimmie L. Cash, 29 Aug 1984  
Col Joseph W. Ralston, 6 Feb 1986  
Brig Gen James L. Jamerson, 27 Feb 1987  
Brig Gen Ben Nelson Jr., 18 Jan 1989  
Brig Gen Marvin R. Esmond, 2 Sep 1992  
Col Charles T. Ohlinger Iii, 19 Aug 1993  
Brig Gen Stephen B. Plummer, 1 Apr 1994  
Mg Marvin R. Esmond, 14 Apr 1994  
Brig Gen Carrol H. Chandler, 2 Apr 1996  
Brig Gen John L. Barry, 17 Jul 1998  
Brig Gen Stephen T. Sargeant, 15 Feb 2000  
Brig Gen Philip M. Breedlove, 17 Jun 2002

Brig Gen Robin Rand, 8 Jun 2004  
Brig Gen Noel T. Jones, 13 Jun 2006  
Brig Gen Kurt F. Neubauer, 9 Jul 2008  
Brig Gen Michael D. Rothstein  
Brig Gen Scott L. Pleus  
Brig Gen Michael D. Rothstein, 12 Sep 2012  
Brig Gen Scott L Pleus, 20 Jun 2014  
Brig Gen Brook J. Leonard, 13 Jul 2016

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

Vietnam  
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  
Commando Hunt V  
Commando Hunt VI  
Commando Hunt VII  
Vietnam Ceasefire

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

#### **Decorations**

Presidential Unit Citations (Vietnam)

1 Nov 1968-1 May 1969

1 Oct 1969-30 Apr 1970

1 Apr 1972-22 Feb 1973

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

1 Dec 1970-30 Nov 1971

1 Dec 1971-29 Feb 1972

23 Feb 1973-28 Feb 1974

24 Jan-2 May 1975

#### Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan 1977-1 Jan 1979  
1 Jul 1980-30 Jun 1982  
1 Jun 1984-31 May 1986  
1 May 1987-30 Apr 1989  
1 May 1989-30 Apr 1990  
1 May 1990-30 Apr 1991  
1 Jul 1994-30 Jun 1996  
1 Jul 1996-30 Jun 1998  
1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000  
1 Jul 2001-30 Jun 2003  
1 Jul 2003-30 Jun 2005  
1 Jul 2005-30 Jun 2006  
1 Jul 2006-30 Jun 2007  
1 Jul 2007-30 Jun 2008  
1 Jul 2008-30 Jun 2009  
1 Jul 2009-30 Jun 2010  
1 Jul 2010-30 Jun 2011  
1 Jul 2011-30 Jun 2012  
1 Jul 2012-30 Jun 2013  
1 Jul 2013-30 Jun 2014  
1 Jul 2014-30 Jun 2015  
1 Jul 2015-30 Jun 2016

#### Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

8 Apr 1967-28 Jan 1973

#### **Bestowed Honors**

Authorized to display honors earned by the 56 Operations Group prior to 15 Aug 1947

#### **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

## Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

ETO, 20 Feb-9 Mar 1944

Holland, 18 Sep 1944

## EMBLEM





Tenné, a chevron Azure fimbriated Or, charged with two lightning bolts conjoined chevronwise of the third, all within a diminished bordure of the like. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "56 FIGHTER WING" in Blue 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 emblem is symbolic of the Wing. The heraldic chevron represents support and signifies the Wing's support of the Nation's quest for peace. The lightning bolt represents the speed and aggressiveness with which the unit performs. The specific colors represent the Air Corps and commemorate the service of the 56 Fighter Group, whose honors and history the Wing inherits. (Approved for 56 Group, 4 Apr 1942 and for 56 Wing, 19 Apr 1967)

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

The wing supported exercises, operations, and training programs of Strategic Air Command, 1947-1948. It pioneered the first west-to-east jet fighter transatlantic crossing along the northern air route in Jul 1948 and provided air defense for a large portion of the northeastern United States, Dec 1948-Feb 1952.

The 56 provided air defense in the Michigan area, 1961-1963.

It performed combat in Southeast Asia, Apr 1967-Aug 1973, and combat support until Jun 1975, employing a wide variety of aircraft to meet specialized missions. Those missions included interdiction, psychological warfare, close air support, search and rescue, forward air control, training Thai and Laotian air forces, and helicopter escort for clandestine insertion and extraction of personnel in Laos and North Vietnam. During the sieges of Khe Sanh, Feb-Apr 1968, and Lima Site 85, Jan-Mar 1968, it provided close air support. Wing elements participated in the Son Tay Prison raid on 21 Nov 1970 and continued combat in Vietnam until mid-Jan 1973, in Laos until 22 Feb 1973, and in Cambodia until 15 Aug 1973. The 56 assisted in the evacuations of Phnom Penh on 11 Apr 1975 and Saigon, 29-30 Apr 1975. During the SS

Mayaguez rescue operation on 15 May 1975, it provided forward air control and helicopter insertion/extraction support.

Upon return to the United States on 30 Jun 1975, it absorbed resources of the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing and operated MacDill AFB and nearby Avon Park Range, FL. The wing conducted F-4D/E replacement training for pilots, weapon systems officers, and maintenance personnel, Jul 1975-Jul 1982.

It was equipped with UH-1P helicopters, 1976-1987, to support Avon Range logistics needs, search and rescue efforts, and humanitarian missions.

With conversion to F-16A/B aircraft in 1980-1982, the 56 became the designated unit for transitioning USAF and select allied nation pilots into the new fighter, while continuing to augment NORAD's air defense forces in the southeastern US. The wing provided logistic support to US Central Command beginning in 1983 and to US Special Operations Command after 1986.

It upgraded to F-16C/D aircraft in 1988-1990, providing support personnel and equipment to units in Southwest Asia, Aug 1990-Mar 1991.

From early 1994, the wing primarily provided combat crew training to US and Allied services through 2003.

The Air Force has selected Luke AFB, Ariz., to receive 72 additional F-35A strike fighters, bringing the base's eventual total to 144. "This is great news for Luke AFB and the West Valley community," said Brig. Gen. Mike Rothstein, commander of the 56 Fighter Wing. "The decision to base additional F-35 fighters here ensures the long-term viability of our mission and continues our legacy of training the world's greatest fighter pilots." The fifth-generation aircraft, manufactured by Lockheed Martin, are slated to begin arriving at Luke in the spring of 2014. The base already has undergone \$10 million worth of construction projects—out of an anticipated \$57 million—to accommodate the additional fighters. The Air Force chose Luke as the home for the F-35A pilot training center in 2012 saying it based the decision on the base's facilities, ramp capacity, range access, weather, and capacity for future growth. Luke also will serve as the F-35A international pilot training site. 2013

A Royal Australian Air Force F-35 Lightning II touched down at Luke AFB, Ariz., becoming the first international F-35 partner to join the pilot training schoolhouse there on Dec. 18. "Today, we take another tremendous step forward in our transition to the F-35 here at Luke," said 56 Fighter Wing Commander Brig. Gen. Scott Pleus in a release. "Australia is the first of 10 nations. ...Welcoming our first Australian F-35 is a special day for Luke and the community that has been so supportive of us, he added. RAAF F-35 pilots will train with the wing's 61st Fighter Squadron, as well as Italian and Norwegian F-35 pilots whom are slated to begin training under the auspices of Luke's future 62nd FS by next June, according to the wing. Dutch and Turkish F-35 partners also will eventually train at Luke, in addition to current and potential foreign military sales customers.2014



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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.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.