

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



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

74<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 17 Dec 1941  
Redesignated 74<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942  
Activated, 4 Jul 1942  
Redesignated 74<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 28 Feb 1944  
Inactivated, 5 Jan 1946  
Activated, 10 Oct 1946  
Inactivated, 24 Sep 1949  
Redesignated 74<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 19 Dec 1950  
Activated, 12 Jan 1951  
Inactivated, 25 Jun 1958  
Redesignated 74<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron, 18 May 1972  
Activated, 1 Jul 1972  
Redesignated 74<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 1 Nov 1991  
Inactivated, 15 Feb 1992  
Activated, 15 Jun 1993

#### STATIONS

Kunming, China, 4 Jul 1942  
Yunnani, China, 12 Mar 1943  
Kweilin, China, 19 May 1943 (detachment operated from Liuchow, China, 16 Feb–30 Apr 1944)  
Luliang, China, 12 Sep 1944 (detachment operated from Tushan, China, Mar–Aug 1945)  
Liuchow, China, Aug 1945  
Hangchow, China, 15 Oct–4 Dec 1945  
Ft Lewis, Wash, 3–5 Jan 1946

Northwest Field (later, Northwest Guam AFB), Guam, 10 Oct 1946–3 Apr 1949  
Howard AFB, CZ, 25 Apr–24 Sep 1949  
Presque Isle AFB, ME, 12 Jan 1951–19 Aug 1954  
Thule AB, Greenland, 20 Aug 1954–25 Jun 1958  
England AFB, LA, 1 Jul 1972–15 Feb 1992  
Pope AFB, NC, 15 Jun 1993

### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 2 Jul–28 Dec 1973  
King Fahd Aprt, Saudi Arabia, 29 Aug 1990–20 Apr 1991

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

23<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Group, 4 Jul 1942–5 Jan 1946  
23<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Group, 10 Oct 1946–24 Sep 1949  
23d Fighter Interceptor Group, 12 Jan 1951  
4711<sup>th</sup> Defense Wing, 6 Feb 1952  
528<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Group, 16 Feb 1953  
64<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 21 Aug 1954  
4734<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Group, 1 Apr 1957  
64<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 1 May–25 Jun 1958  
23<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter (later, 23<sup>rd</sup> Fighter) Wing, 1 Jul 1972–15 Feb 1992  
23<sup>rd</sup> Operations Group, 15 Jun 1993

### **ATTACHMENTS**

354<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 2 Jul–28 Dec 1973  
Tactical Fighter Wing, 23, Provisional, 20 Dec 1990–20 Apr 1991

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-40, 1942–1944  
P-51, 1944–1945  
P-47, 1946–1949  
RF-80, 1949  
F-86, 1951–1952  
F-89, 1952  
F-94, 1952–1953  
F-89, 1953–1958  
A-7, 1972–1981  
A-10, 1980–1992  
F-16  
F-16C  
F-16D  
P-40K  
P-40N  
P-40M

P-51B

P-51D

F-89C

F-86A

F-89D

F-86E

## **COMMANDERS**

Maj Frank Schiel Jr., 4 Jul 1942

Maj Albert J. Baulmer, Dec 1942

Maj John D. Lombard, c. Mar 1943

LTC Norval C. Bonawitz, 7 Jul 1943

Maj Arthur W. Cruickshank, 15 May 1944

Maj John C. Herbst, 1944

Maj Philip G. Chapman, Feb 1945

Maj Floyd Finberg, Mar 1945

Maj Bruce Downs, Jun 1945

Maj Julius C. Lowell, Sep 1945-unkn

Maj John C. Haygood, 10 Oct 1946

Maj Joseph H. Griffin, 8 Nov 1947

LTC Charles E. Parsons, 1 Jan 1948

Cpt Gardner E. Cole, 7 Dec 1948

Cpt Adolph J. Bregar, c. Apr-24 Sep 1949

Cpt John P. Wilson, 12 Jan 1951

LTC William B. Hawkins Jr., 13 Jan 1951

Maj Dudley M. Watson, c. May 1952

Cpt Charles B. Morfit, 23 Jun 1952

LTC Richard L. Crutcher Jr., 23 Jul 1952

LTC Fred J. Wolfe, 19 Aug 1955

LTC Walter A. Smith Jr., 19 May 1956

Maj James A. Kyle, 1957-25 Jun 1958

LTC Clarence P. Bell, 1 Jul 1972

LTC Larry K. Barton, 23 Jul 1974

LTC Roy H. Boone, 16 Jun 1976

LTC Robert I. Bond, 17 May 1978

LTC Fred C. Boli, 26 Sep 1979

LTC John M. Roberson, 24 Nov 1979

LTC Robert A. Heston, 30 Nov 1981

LTC Richard C. Lemon, 18 Nov 1983

LTC Bobby D. Buffkin, 15 Nov 1985

LTC Robert O. Williams, 5 Oct 1987

LTC Phillip S. Williams, 17 Oct 1989-unkn

LTC Dana T. Atkins, 15 Jun 1993

LTC Michael V. Ely, 1 Jul 1994

LTC Timothy B. Vigil, 10 Jul 1996  
LTC John F. Bingaman, 3 Jul 1997  
LTC Charles L. Schneider, 7 Apr 1999  
LTC Arden B. Dahl, 26 Mar 2001  
LTC Charles C. Floyd, 12 Jul 2002  
LTC Jeffrey L. Cowan, 26 Apr 2004  
LTC Russell Myers, 1 Oct 2006

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II  
India-Burma  
China Defensive  
Western Pacific  
China Offensive

Southwest Asia  
Defense of Saudi Arabia  
Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation  
Hunan Province, China, 17–25 Jun 1944

### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards**

1 Jul 1980–30 Jun 1981  
1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1983  
1 Apr 1989–31 Mar 1991

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, 2 Jul–21 Dec 1972

## **EMBLEM**

(WWII): Over a shield blue, with a border gray, a bolt of lightning yellow, superimposed over the center of the shield, with the point extending over the upper and lower edges of the shield, thereover a representation of the "Flying Tiger" in natural colors, with wings white, extending upperward to the corners of the shield; the tiger represented as "closing in for the kill."  
(Approved 24 Sep 1952.)



On a Blue disc edged with a narrow Yellow border, a White sun with twelve pointed rays fimbriated Yellow from which emerges within a Red burst, the head and forepaws of an Orange Bengal tiger with paws outstretched, detailed Black, White eye, ear, teeth and claws, Red tongue and pupil, wearing a top hat of Blue, White and Red with White five pointed stars. (Approved, 4 May 1979)

**MOTTO**

**NICKNAME**  
FLYING TIGERS

## **OPERATIONS**

The 74th Fighter Squadron, formed on July 4, 1942 in China, to succeed the 1st Pursuit Squadron of the American Volunteer Group (AVG), possesses a most unique and diverse history. It inherited the AVG P-40 B & E Models, was manned by two Majors, eighteen Lieutenants, one M/Sgt, two Tech/Sgts, seven buck Sergeants, thirty-five Corporal/Private. The earliest flights struck Japanese targets in Indo-China, Thailand, Burma and defended areas of west China. The Squadron was nearly decimated when caught on the ground by Japanese aircraft, without warning, suffering severe losses in men, material and aircraft at Yunnanyi, China.

The Squadron moved to Kweilin in May '43, and acquired an offensive role. Escort missions of B-25 and B-24 aircraft to the Canton - Hong Kong area were frequently conducted. In the Fall, the Squadron joined with the 75th Squadron at Hengyang to repel the Japanese incursion crossing the Tung Ting Lake in their annual "rice bowl" raid around the Changsha area. These close support and interdiction missions were deadly, costly and successful.

Spring of 1944 found the Japanese commencing their Ichigo Campaign which ultimately severed China in half by sweeping and occupying our forward Bases at Hengyang, Lingling, Kweilin and Luichow. It was the norm for the men to work round-the-clock maintaining damaged war-weary aircraft, while, pilots were flying four to seven close support missions per day. The Squadron, selected by Eglin Air Base Proving Ground, was the first to test and employ in combat the cumbersome and frequently inaccurate Air-to-Ground missile.

Upon loss of Bases, 14th Air Force Squadrons were forced to evacuate westward, while the 74th was directed to move east and "commence operations behind enemy lines" from Kanchow. Targeting ranged along the east coast from Hong Kong to Swatow, Amoy, Foochow, and down the Yangtze River. striking virgin territory of Anking, Wuhu, former Capital Nanking and the unsuspected airfields at Shanghai. It was this time frame in which the 74th was recognized and identified as the Guerrilla Squadron. The 74th Commander during this period was Major John C. "Pappy" Herbst, who became the leading Ace of the 14th Air Force with 18-1/4 air kills.

The overall record of the 74th, like its sister Squadrons, was outstanding under deplorable logistical support, severe weather phenomenon and rigorous living conditions. Missions ranged from the Salween River 1,600 miles east to Shanghai, from the Yangtze 750 miles south to the Hainan Island - Hong Kong area, transversing mountainous terrain with no electronic aids for navigation. Only pilotage, time and distance was utilized with inaccurate maps on which the Far North was marked, "Unexplored".

One hundred twenty-four Japanese Aircraft were destroyed in Air Combat, an estimated 143 destroyed on the ground, 43 thousand tons of enemy shipping was sunk, and estimated seven thousand Japanese military personnel killed.

The 74th losses totaled forty outstanding men, of whom seven were ground crew members

killed by Japanese bombs and strafing. Of the thirty-three pilots, only four were shot down by Japanese aircraft, twenty-three to enemy ground fire and five to weather conditions. It is noteworthy that our ground crews, averaging almost three years in China, existed and labored under the most austere conditions. It is to those skilled men that we owe so much. The Mission of the 74th would not have succeeded without the ingenuity, productiveness, and Love of Country exemplified by these marvelously Young Americans.

At the end of World War II, the 74th Fighter Squadron, like so many other flying units, was recalled to the United States and deactivated. It was reactivated after just 10 months, standing up in Guam on October 10th, 1946. The Flying Tigers flew the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt under the command of 20th Air Force, Far East Air Forces, until April 1949, when the squadron made the transition to the RF-80 Shooting Star and moved to Howard AFB in the Panama Canal Zone. The Tigers' stint in Panama proved to be short lived, as the squadron was deactivated in September of the same year.

In January 1951 the 74th was re-designated a Fighter-Interceptor Squadron and moved north. The Flying Tigers, based at Presque Isle AFB, Maine, were equipped with the world's best dogfighter: North American's F-86 Sabre.

On February 25, 1952, the first incident of the new F-89Cs shedding their wings occurred. By September 15 there would be five more of these catastrophes, and then the entire F-89 fleet was grounded. As these incidents were occurring, Northrop was in the process of delivering F-89Cs to the 74th FIS at Presque Isle AFB, Maine, yet by the end of March only nineteen of their authorized twenty-six interceptors had been delivered and further deliveries were curtailed as a result of the investigation of the February 25 incident.

Two 74th FIS F-89Cs were lost to catastrophic wing failures, one on July 18 and the other on September 22. These incidents brought about the grounding of the Scorpion on September 25, as mentioned earlier. In the meantime, all of ADC's operational F-89Bs were being returned to Northrop for structural and engine improvements, which would bring them up to F-89C standards.

After initially determining that the aforementioned incident was brought on by pilot induced over-stressing of the airframe, the F-89s were released for deliveries again, with limitations upon speeds and G forces permitted. Still, by the end of June, only three more Scorpions were accepted by the ADC. In an attempt to equip the newly activated 433rd FIS at Truax AFB some of the 74th FIS F-89s were shuffled to Wisconsin.

The first of these squadrons to be re-equipped with F-89Cs was the 74th FIS at Presque Isle AFB, Maine. Major Richard Crutcher was their commanding officer. Their first Scorpion received was a B model that was assigned for maintenance instruction in April 1952, which was followed by delivery of the first three of the allocated complement of F-89Cs on June 15.

By the end of July the 74th FIS had thirteen F-89s assigned and transition training continued, with the squadron standing alert with their F-86s until the task was accomplished. But on September 22, Captain Samuel Nelson and R/O 2nd Lt. Conway Roberts had another wing failure occur. A loud "crack" was heard and the wing started to fold up over their canopy. Roberts ejected successfully, but Nelson's seat failed to fire and he narrowly escaped from the aircraft by bailing out manually before it crashed. This accident brought about the fleet-wide grounding of the F-89 on September 25.

The 74th FIS borrowed back F-86As from other squadrons to continue their alert commitment and held their F-89s in a combat alert readiness status, in the event that they might have to be flown in an actual war, until they were relieved from their alert status on December 12. At this time they commenced transition to F-94Bs. The 74th FIS then became operational with the F-94 until June 1953 when the first of eight reworked F-89s were returned to them from Northrop and the squadron actually became operational with the Scorpion.

On December 15, 1953, the 74th FIS lost another Scorpion at Limestone AFB, Maine (later Loring AFB). 2nd Lt.'s Grady Breland and R/O Bill Hill were trying to get into Limestone in instrument weather, but missed the runway and crashed a mile north-northwest of the airfield. The exact cause for this loss was never determined, but IFR weather and the crew's inexperience was a primary factor.

In January 1954 a Warning Order was received informing the 74th FIS of an impending transfer to Greenland and their complement of F-89s was increased to seventeen. They would also gain additional personnel via transfer from the 57th FIS, which was also at Presque Isle AFB, to increase their manpower.

On August 6 the movement to Thule Air Base began via MATS C-54s and C-124s. The F-89s staged through Goose Bay, Bluie West 1, Narsarsuaq, and then Bluie West 8, Sondrestrom. On August 9 Major Crutcher landed the first F-89 north of the Arctic Circle. Effective August 21 the 74th FIS was thus reassigned from ADC to the North East Air Command, but due to weather and other problems, the last 74th FIS F-89 did not land at Thule until August 25. (As this movement was taking place, the 318th FIS was in the process of returning to the United States from Thule with F-94Bs. The F-94s would be transferred to the Air National Guard, and the 318th FIS would replace the 74th FIS at Presque Isle with F-89Ds).

On August 5, 1954, the first echelon of the 318th FIS arrived at Presque Isle AFB, Maine, from their NEAC assignment at Thule Air Base, Greenland, as an exchange squadron with the 74th FIS.

On August 10 the 74th FIS took over the air defense alert duties at Thule, but it was not until August 25 that the last of their F-89Cs and crews arrived from Maine.

On August 15, 1955 the 74th FIS began transferring their F-89Cs to the Michigan ANG and received F-89Ds. On April 1, 1957, the parent Northeast Air Command was inactivated and the



74th FIS returned to the control of the Air Defense Command, but remained under the direction of the 64th Air Division. On June 25, 1958, the 74th FIS was inactivated at Thule.

The 74th remained inactive until July 1972, when it was reunited with its World War II sister squadrons, the 75th and 76th, under the 23rd Tactical Fighter Wing at England AFB, Louisiana. The Tigers, flying the Vought A-7D Corsair II, deployed to Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base in July 1973, and accounted for the destruction of 311 enemy structures, 25 ground artillery and missile sites, three bridges and 9,500 cubic meters of supplies. For its contribution the 74th earned the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm.

The Flying Tigers ushered in a new era in December 1980, when they took delivery of their first Fairchild Republic A-10 Thunderbolt II. Less than a year after accepting its new jet the 23rd Tactical Fighter Wing captured top honors in Ninth Air Force's tactical bombing competition and won six of nine events in Gunsmoke '81, including top maintenance and munitions awards, and was the top A-10 unit in the shootout. The 23rd TFW reappeared in Gunsmoke competitions for the next eight years.

In August 1990 the 74th TFS deployed (along with the 76th) to King Fahd International Airport, Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The 23rd TFW Tigers flew more than 2,700 combat sorties over Iraq and Kuwait, making substantial contributions to the A-10's impressive war-time performance: 987 tanks, 926 artillery pieces, 500 armored personnel carriers, 1106 trucks, 112 military structures, 96 radars, 72 bunkers, 50 anti-aircraft batteries, 28 command posts, 11 FROG missiles, 9 SAM sites, and 12 aircraft destroyed.

While the Tigers were in Southwest Asia, Congress decided that England AFB would close no later than September 1992. Accordingly, 23rd Fighter Wing was inactivated on June 1, 1992 and stood up the same day as the 23rd Wing at Pope AFB, North Carolina.

With the move to Pope, the 74th FS transitioned to the F-16, the 75th retained the A-10, and the 76th inactivated. The 74th flew F-16s for nearly five years before returning to the A-10, in April 1997, when the 23rd Wing once again became the 23rd Fighter Group.

In April 1999, the 74th FS deployed five aircraft and 60 personnel to Operation ALLIED FORCE, the NATO air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia intended to stop Serbia's ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. Designated the 74th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, the unit joined A-10s from Spangdahlem's 81st EFS and flew close air support and forward air control missions against Serbian army targets in Kosovo.

In March 2002, the 74th landed the first fighter aircraft inside Afghanistan, deploying from Al Jaber AB, Kuwait in support of Operation Anaconda. Operating from an austere air base at Bagram, the 74th flew 200 sorties in Afghanistan, expending ten tons of bombs, 50 rockets, and 3000 rounds of 30mm ammunition. The Flying Tigers inflicted hundreds of casualties on the terrorists of al-Qaeda and their Taliban supporters.

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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.