

68 FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

68 Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 20 Nov 1940
Activated, 15 Jan 1941
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 20 Aug 1943
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, Two-Engine, 24 May 1944
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 8 Jan 1946
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron (All-Weather), 20 Feb 1947
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, All-Weather, 10 Aug 1948
Redesignated 68 Fighter All-Weather Squadron, 20 Jan 1950
Redesignated 68 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 25 Apr 1951
Redesignated 68 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 25 Jul 1964
Inactivated, 30 Jun 1971
Activated, 30 Sep 1973
Redesignated 68 Fighter Squadron, 1 Nov 1991

STATIONS

Selfridge Field, MI, 15 Jan 1941
Baton Rouge, LA, 6 Oct 1941
Oakland, CA, 22 Jan–17 Feb 1942

Camp Ascot, Brisbane, Australia, 8 Mar 1942
Amberly Field, Australia, 16 Mar 1942
Tongatabu, Tonga Islands, 16 May–28 Oct 1942
Noumea, New Caledonia, 2 Nov 1942
Guadalcanal, 12 Nov 1942
Fiji Islands, 12 Apr 1943 (operated from Guadalcanal, 12 Apr–Dec 1943)
Bougainville, Solomon Islands, 4 Feb 1944 (operated from Ondonga, New Georgia, 27 Jan–10 Feb 1944)
Middleburg Island, Dutch New Guinea, 17 Aug 1944
San Jose, Mindoro, 23 Feb 1945 (operated from Morotai, 12 Feb–25 Mar 1945)
Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 6 Mar 1945
Fukuoka, Japan, 15 Dec 1945
Ashiya, Japan, 20 May 1946
Itazuke, Japan, Sep 1946
Bofu AFB, Japan, 19 Oct 1948
Ashiya AFB, (later, AB), Japan, 3 May 1949
Itazuke AB, Japan, 1 Apr 1950–15 Jun 1964
George AFB, CA, 16 Jun 1964
Homestead AFB, FL, 1 Oct 1968
England AFB, LA, 30 Oct 1970–30 Jun 1971
Clark AB, Philippines, 30 Sep 1973–30 Sep 1975
Moody AFB, GA, 30 Sep 1975

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Miyazaki, Japan, 10–24 Aug 1947, and Tsuiki, Japan, 29 May–9 Jun 1948
Deachments operated at Kimpo, South Korea, 30 Nov 1950–Mar 1951 and 27 Jun–24 Aug 1951
Suwon, South Korea, Mar–19 Apr 1951, 23–27 Jun 1951 and 24 Aug 1951–23 Mar 1952
Taegu, South Korea, 19 Apr–23 Jun 1951
Misawa AB, Japan, 9 Apr 1951–12 Feb 1952
Osan AB, South Korea, 18 Jul–Aug 1960, 6–16 Mar 1961, 12–22 Jun 1961, 10–21 Sep 1961, and 8–18 Dec 1961
Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 27 Aug–24 Nov 1965
Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, 24 Nov–6 Dec 1965
Kunsan AB, South Korea, 20 Jun–9 Dec 1969
Ramstein AB, Germany, 30 May–5 Jul 1990

ASSIGNMENTS

58 Pursuit (later, 58 Fighter) Group, 15 Jan 1941
347 Fighter Group, 3 Oct 1942
18 Fighter Group, 1 Nov 1945
8 Fighter Group, 15 Dec 1945
347 Fighter Group, 20 Feb 1947
Fifth Air Force, 24 Jun 1950

314 Air Division, 1 Dec 1950
Japan Air Defense Force, 1 Mar 1952
Fifth Air Force, 1 Sep 1954
43 Air Division, 1 Mar 1955
41 Air Division, 1 Oct 1957
Fifth Air Force, 1 Jun 1962
32 Tactical Fighter Wing, 16 Jun 1964
8 Tactical Fighter Wing, 25 Jul 1964
831 Air Division, 6 Dec 1965
479 Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 May 1968
4531 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Oct 1968
31 Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Oct 1970
4403 Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Oct 1970–30 Jun 1971
405 Fighter Wing, 30 Sep 1973
3 Tactical Fighter Wing, 16 Sep 1974
347 Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Sep 1975
347 Operations Group, 1 May 1991

ATTACHMENTS

315 Composite Wing, 10 Apr–24 Nov 1947
8 Fighter-Bomber Group, 1 Mar 1950–11 Aug 1950
49 Fighter-Bomber Group, 11 Aug–30 Sep 1950
8 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 1 Oct–1 Dec 1950
6160 Air Base Wing, 1 Dec 1950–20 Oct 1954
8 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 20 Oct 1954–1 Mar 1955
8 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Dec 1961–15 Jun 1964
6234 Tactical Fighter Wing, c. 27 Aug–6 Dec 1965
479 Tactical Fighter Wing, 6 Dec 1965–15 May 1968
354 Tactical Fighter Wing, 20 Jun–9 Dec 1969
86 Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 May–5 Jul 1990

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-35
P-36
P-43, 1941
P-40, 1941–1942, 1942–1943
P-39, 1942–1944
O-47, 1942
P-400, 1942–1943
P-38, 1942–1945
P-51, 1946–1947
P-61, 1947–1950
F-82, 1949–1952
F-94, 1951–1954

F-80, 1953–1954
F-86D, 1954–1960
F-102, 1959–1964
F-4, 1964–1968, 1968–1969, 1970
F-100, 1970–1971
F-4, 1975–1987
F-16, 1987

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Jim Kula

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
China Defensive
Guadalcanal
New Guinea
Northern Solomons
Bismark Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Korea
UN Defensive
UN Offensive
CCF Intervention
First UN Counteroffensive
CCF Spring Offensive
UN Summer-Fall Offensive
Second Korean Winter

Vietnam
Vietnam Defensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Netherlands East Indies, 7, 20 and 22 Nov 1944

Presidential Unit Citations
Pacific Theater, 7 Aug–9 Dec 1942
Southeast Asia, [25 Aug–22 Oct 1965]

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
12 May 1963–21 Mar 1964
1 Dec 1965–31 Mar 1967
[1 Oct] 1968–30 Jun 1970
1 Jan 1977–30 Apr 1978
1 May 1978–31 May 1979
23 Feb 1991–22 Feb 1999

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

EMBLEM





On a disc Grayed Light Blue, border Black, a knight in Black armor, wearing Light Red gauntlets, boots, and plume, carrying a White lance, edged and trimmed Black, in the right hand, and holding a spade-typed shield of Light Red, marked with a White cross, in the left hand, while standing, affronte, on jags in Yellow lightning bolts, pilewise, points toward base, between a Black cloud formation in dexter base and a like formation in sinister base. (Approved, 29 Nov 1944)

MOTTO

LIGHTNING LANCERS

OPERATIONS

Combat in Korea, 27 Jun 1950–23 Mar 1952. Air defense of southern Japan, Mar 1952–1 Jun 1964.

Air defense of Tongatabu, Jun–Oct 1942. Combat in South and Southwest Pacific, 12 Nov 1942–13 Aug 1945. Combat in Korea, 27 Jun 1950–23 Mar 1952. Air defense of southern Japan, Mar 1952–1 Jun 1964. Combat in Southeast Asia, Aug–Dec 1965. Unmanned, 30 Sep 1973–30 Sep 1975. Deployed aircraft and personnel to Saudi Arabia, 26 Jun–22 Dec 1991.

On 20 February, 1947 the squadron's designation was changed to the 68 Fighter (All-Weather) Squadron. At that time the North American F-82 Twin-Mustang was in use as a night fighter, having been converted from a long range escort fighter by the addition of a radome, electronic intercept gear, and radar observer. With the beginning of hostilities in Korea came an increase in the Lancer's activities. The squadron's night fighter was not only still good for escort work, but doubled as an attack aircraft, giving enemy ground troops a difficult time.

On June 27, 1950, First Lieutenant William G. Hudson became the first United Nations air victor by shooting down a Russian LA-11 near Seoul, South Korea. In July of that year our fighters had the job of escorting General MacArthur's "Bataan" to an airfield in Korea.

The 68 Lancers were the first Night Fighters in Korea, the first United Nations aircraft to begin a

program of interdiction, cutting enemy rail lines and roads, blasting warehouses and supply dumps, and destroying vehicles, bridges and troops.

With the beginning of 1951, the squadron found itself with a more intensified program of intercepting low flying targets and a new name. The 68 FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON. During the continued hostilities in Korea, our squadron sent a part of the squadron to Northern Japan. The latter part of the year we received the new Lockheed F94B, and this was the aircraft we finished the Korean war with.

In the early part of 1954 we received the new North American F86D. This aircraft was equipped with radar gear but no radar observer and the Fifties were replaced with twenty four Mighty Mouse rockets.

The year of 1956 saw the Lancer win the Far East Air to Air Rocket firing title over a field of fine teams. Colonel Fred J. Henry was team captain and rounding out the team were Captain Paris D. Park, Lts. John W. Williams, John W. Polk, Robert Brumet, and Jack E. Doty.

1956 also saw the completion of the new alert hanger, which has provided more comfort and higher efficiency in the performance of alert duties. This year we also saw Maj William M. Thompson take over the squadron, replacing LTC Edwin Bishop Jr,

68 Fs Deployed Aircraft And Personnel To Homestead Afb, Fl, In Support Of Operation Standoff Four, Following Downing Of American Aircraft By Cuba.

68 Fs Deployed To Air Expeditionary Force li At Shaheed Mwaffaq Salti Ab, Jordan, Apr-Jun 96.

F-16c Aircraft From 68 Fs Crashed While Deployed To Kirtland Afb, Nm, 31 Jul 96.

68 Fs Deployed To Prince Sultan Ab In Support Of Osw, 8 Dec 96 Through 10 Mar 97.

The 4th Fighter (All-Weather) Squadron returned to its home base at Naha Air Base, Okinawa and the 20th Air Force, while the 68 and 339th F(AW)S's returned to their respective bases in Japan. At this time the 68 F(AW)S was also assigned the task of defending the skies of South Korea, in addition to that of southern Japan. They would do this from Japan at first, and then later from Suwon, South Korea when it was recaptured from the communist forces. They also were tasked with flying night interdiction missions, weather reconnaissance and an occasional fighter escort missions. In support of this effort, the 339th F(AW)S would take over some of the original defensive missions assigned to the 68 in Japan, and along with the 4th F(AW)S detail of some F-82s and air and ground crews on aTDY basis to bolster the 68's combat efforts in Korea.

Commencing during the winter of 1950/51 the Chinese communist intervention and increasing Mig-15 activity caused 5th Air Force planners to rethink their estimation of nocturnal communist air activity. Lost ground had been retaken and the battle line restabilized: for the most part slightly north to northeast of the original 38th Parallel. The tactical squadrons were

rebased at Seoul and Suwon. Among these were two squadrons of F-86s at Seoul, and they were of upmost value because of their scarcity. A detachment of 68 F(AW)S F-82s was based at Suwon, K-13, that was bolstered by Marine F7Fs and F4Us. But it was fact that these conventional aircraft were far too slow and their radar too antiquated to perform adequately against the occasional Mig-15 that had the audacity to overfly the area.

While the 68 FIS continued to maintain a detachment of F-82s on strip alert at Suwon, they also began transition training into all-weather jet fighters. The F-94-1 MTU arrived at Itazuke on May 21 and remained there until June 30 when they moved on to Naha to work with the 4th FIS. The MTU, and the Technical Representatives from the associated component manufacturers continued to conduct intensive training on the AN/APG-33 radar, A-1C gunsight, and the afterburning J-33-A-33 engine. It was during this period, and through October that the 339th experienced a massive influx and departure of people as men rotated in and out of the squadron on TOY while they studied the F-94. They also had, briefly, all of the F-94s destined for the 4th and 68 FIS's as they were assigned to the squadron for calibration and harmonization checks.

The first F-94B-1 sfrom the 339th to the 68 FIS were 51 -5349 and 5355 that were accepted by the 68 on October 10, 1951. The first of the twenty-seven F-94Bs assigned to the 4th FIS was 51-5359 that arrived at Naha Air Base , Okinawa on October 21.

By mid December the 68 FIS was deemed as having sufficient aircraft and qualified aircrews ready for assignment to Korea. Two F-94s were placed on strip alert at Suwon on December 28, 1951 supplementing the F-82s. The Twin Mustangs would alternate scrambles with the Marine night fighters and continue their armed reconnaissance and weather missions against North Korean targets and communist aircraft north of the MLR, while the F-94s would be utilized to seek out and identify unknown targets over South Korea or over the Yellow Sea. Anyplace where there was no danger of it's falling into enemy hands in the event it might have to be abandoned by its crew.

While this was going on, the 339th FIS assumed from the 68 FIS the commitment to defend Misawa, northern Honshu and the northern Japanese island of Hokkiado. For this obligation they furnished six F-94s and six crews on a rotating basis from Johnson. The squadron strength was bolstered, too, at this point by the gain of four combat experienced pilots from the 68's detachment in Korea. The squadron at this time had thirty-one pilots, twenty-one of which were combat ready. Sixteen radar observers, of which fourteen were combat ready.

During February 1952 FEAF had a total of fifty-eight observations of enemy aircraft during nighttime hours. Of these, on three occasions the enemy aircraft made firing passes upon the United Nations aircraft. The history of the 68 FIS mentions some of the problems in dealing with these aircraft that were called "Bed Check Charlies," for their pro-pensity to destroy an individuals night's sleep. "The low-flying North Korean light aircraft would come in over the East China Sea to harass American installations with small grenades and bombs. Overtake rate of the fast jet presented a tactical problem at first, but practice against slow-flying aircraft improved

ability of crews to intercept, "... Bed Check" aircraft were eluding the F-94s by flying in valleys, thus being lost in radar ground clutter..."

"The Grey Ghost" was one of the few F-94s to sport any sort of personal identification. Since most interceptors were rotated on and off assignment, and aircrews rotated on a different pattern, the practice of assigning a fighter to a particular crew was impracticable. This F-94B was assigned to the 68 FIS in November 1951, and finished its service life with the 109th FIS in June 1958.

On February 28, 1952 the first F-94 was lost in an attempt to counter these pests. 51 -5476 from the 68 FIS fighter was scrambled out of Suwon against a suspected Bed Check Charlie just prior to midnight on February 27. It was radar vectored northwest of Seoul and disappeared while attacking the bogie at 2,100 feet northeast of the Yonpyon Islands. The last radio contact was at 0015 hours, and at 0020 hours in the morning of February 28 a B-26 pilot observed what he assumed to be flares at grid coordinates YB-420790. Another B-26 reported seeing an explosion somewhere between the island of Taeyonp'yong-do and the city of Haeju.

With the loss of this aircraft in possible enemy territory, a degree of panic occurred within FEAF. Although several F-82 radar pods had been slung-off over communist controlled territory, along with the loss of at least one complete F-82 and both Marine F7F-3Ns and F4U-5Ns, none of their antiquated radar could compare with the sophistication of that carried by the F-94. There was a great fear that the security of the F-94's system, as well as National security would be compromised if this system was captured and analyzed by the communists.

A message was air-dropped to Captain Harold J.O'Connel, Detachment 2,6004th Air Intelligence Service Squadron, who was stationed on the remote island of Taeyonp'yong-do, to expend all efforts necessary to locate the downed aircraft, O'Connel called in all of the local South Korean guerrilla leaders and ordered them to contact all friendly guerrillas on all the neighboring islands and mainland and report if anyone had seen an aircraft crash.

A formation view of the 68 FIS during a show of strength exercise. The nearest F-94B served with the 339th FIS at Johnson AB, the 68 at Itazuke AB, and the 319th at Suwon AB before being returned to the US and assignment to the 118th FIS

Late in the afternoon of February 28 O'Connel received a report from a U.S. Navy LCM that had been underway in the area that at approximately 1530 hours they had sighted a shiny object protruding above the water to a height of three feet. Due to the tide conditions, they had only two and a half feet of water under them, so they could get no closer than twenty-five feet from the object. Nevertheless, a seaman managed to get a grappling hook around it, but even with four people pulling on it, it could not be budged.

The part that could be seen had USAF on it and a narrow red stripe painted around it, was of oval shape, approximately three feet in diameter where it entered the water, and tapered to two and one half feet in diameter at the highest point sticking out of the water. This, they

determined, was the rear portion of an aircraft fuselage, but having no knowledge of a reported crash of an aircraft in the area, they merely noted the location of the object and continued their voyage to their destination.

On February 29 O'Connel dispatched two South Korean junks with United Nations Korean troops on board to the area. But, since the junks were slow and in that the search could only be conducted during low tide conditions when the object would be exposed above the water's surface, three days of searching proved to be fruitless. O'Connel, himself, with a USAF crash boat at his disposal also searched the area without success.

On March 2 a 3rd Air Rescue Squadron H-5, piloted by Captain Walter Hodgson, spotted a one-man life raft floating in a channel. It was not inflated, its CO2 cartridge unfired, but it was outside of its pack and showed evidence of a strong impact. Nearby, two spent parachute flares were found on the sand flats, and some distance away a strip of aluminum aircraft skin that measured three feet in length by eight and a half inches. This object later proved to be from a F-94 type aircraft while the recovered life raft's serial number matched the one fitted to the lost aircraft.

Ten days later a radio report from guerrilla's on Yong-mae-do stated that the body of the pilot, 1st Lt. Richard Cunningham, had washed ashore at their location. (For an unknown reason, Cunningham is not carried by the USAF as a causality of the Korean War, while his Radar Observer, Lt. Jack E. Brindley, is). Due to procrastination and hedging by the guerrillas, it took O'Connel until May 1 to recover the body and ship it to the dispensary at K-16.

The search for, and the attempt to recover the remains of the security sensitive F-94 and possibly the body of Lt. Bradley continued through May 13. It involved over thirty hours of helicopter flying, seven and a half hours of underwater searches. Two underwater contacts were made, but they were beyond the divers depths, so the objects were blown-up by depth charges from HMAS Battan.

Filling the leading edge fuel tanks on a F-94B of the 68 FIS. The leading edge tanks held 52 gallons, while the main fuel cells held 77 gallons each, the filler cap for which is located midway between the national insignia and the fuselage.

O'Connel concluded that the F-94 had either exploded in the air over the search area, or crashed and broke-up upon impact with the water. It was suspected, but never confirmed that it had been the victim of a mid-air collision with an enemy aircraft. The majority of the aircraft settled in deep water, and in probability those pieces that landed on the sand flats were washed into deeper water by the tide currents.

The 319th FIS became operational at Suwon on March 23 with the assigned task of providing Combat Air Patrols (CAPs), during the hours of darkness or adverse weather, to protect United Nations interests, to provide fighter escorts for strategic or tactical bombers as required, and to seek out and destroy enemy aircraft. With this assumption of duties, the 68 FIS was thereby

relieved of its assignment to Korea, and along with the 339th FIS were now tasked with the protection of Japan. The 68 FIS would, however, remain on one-hour notice for possible combat duty in Korea as a reinforcement for the 319th FIS for the duration of the conflict.

As of March 1 the 319th FIS had twenty-six combat ready aircrews and twenty-five F-94s, while the 339th FIS had twenty-three F-94s and thirty-one assigned pilots and eighteen radar operators. The 68 FIS had nineteen F-94s, which included the first six of a shipment of brand new F-94B-5-LO's directly from Lockheed.

During the Spring of 1952 the 68 and 339th FISs continued working with their training and defensive commitments in Japan. They conducted mock exercises against their own detachments and other squadrons within their own groups. In Korea, due to heavy traffic in the Suwon area, (two F-86 and three F-80s squadrons were based there, along with Marine squadrons plus myriad transient transport aircraft), training was limited. But there was plenty of opportunity for proficiency flying and both practice and actual night interceptor missions after sunset when the day fighters shied away.

Tactics and operational deployment of the F-94 and other all-weather fighters would vary with operational necessity and the requirements of the war. One tactic that Major Donald O'Neil, Commanding Officer of the 68 FIS, had found effective was to have a F-94 on patrol at medium altitude, which would drive the enemy aircraft down into the valleys.

The 68 FIS replaced their F-94Bs with F-86Ds, with this one being named "The Diddy Mop," (as in toilet bowl). The F-86D was far superior to the F-94 as an interceptor, although its complex E-4 FCS was "labor intensive." More F-86D/K/Ls were built as a pure defensive aircraft than any other jet fighter.

The 39th FIS was now tasked with maintaining an all-weather alert at Nagoya AB, Japan along with a detachment at Komaki. A Northern detachment at Misawa Air Base and normal squadron operations at Johnson Air Base while under the control of both the 39th and 41st Air Divisions. The Komaki detachment, which had been gained by the squadron in April 1954 from the 68 FIS, was withdrawn on the first of August. One final move was accomplished during this period when the squadron started, on July 31, moving an advance party to Yokota and were all in place by August 10.

The United States Air Force listed that a total of six F-94 pilots were killed in action and six more remain Missing in Action. They do not carry a separate listing for radar observers, but one can assume that there were six in each category. One F-94 was claimed as lost to enemy action, and six more to non-enemy causes on a combat mission, along with two more that were declared missing on a combat mission. Three additional through accidents that occurred under more normal circumstances, although tabulation of the Individual Aircraft Record Cards indicate six in this category by the 319th FIS during the War, and two afterwards. Non committed units, the 4th, 68 and 339th FIS's lost a total of sixteen F-94s during the conflict and a half dozen prior to

transitioning into F-86s a year and a half later. In all 34 FEAF F-94s are confirmed as being lost through one form of attrition or another.

The US Air Force's 347 TFW officially accepted its first F-16 aircraft in recent ceremony at Moody Air Force Base Georgia. The flightline ceremony was highlighted by F-16 and F-4 flyovers and F-16 airship performance by a pilot from the 363 TFW. Moody Air Force Base is receiving three squadrons of F-16s to replace F-4s that had been used at the base for the past 12 years. Lieut. Col. Jim Kula commander of the 68 TFS taxied the base's first F-16 to the ceremony area and presented it to the 347 TFW maintenance and operations commanders who in turn presented to Col. David Oaks Wing Commander. General Dynamics Fort Worth Division was represented at the ceremony by Rolf Krueger, Vice President-Logistics.

USAF Unit Histories
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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.
Unit History. 68 [*Fighter Interceptor Squadron*], *Lightning Lance*. 1956.