

# *America's First Team:*

## The History of the 1st Fighter Wing



*“Air Power has brought with it a new doctrine of war which has caused a complete rearrangement of the existing systems of national defense...the future of our nation is indissolubly bound up in the development of air power.”*

- Brigadier General William “Billy” Mitchell

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Aut Vincere Aut Mori - "Conquer or Die."

The Air Service approved the 1st Fighter Wing's emblem Group on 10 February 1924. Today, the shield serves as a reminder of wing heritage - a long proud heritage that mirrors the growth of air power from wooden framed bi-planes to today's most powerful jets. The green and black colors represent the colors of the Army Air Service. The five stripes stand for the original five Aero Squadrons: 27th AS, 94th AS, 95th AS, 147th AS and 185th AS. The crosses represent the group's five campaigns during World War I: Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, Oise-Aisne, St Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne.



## Introduction: The 1st Fighter Wing

The study of the 1st Fighter Wing's history is comparable to examining the history of air power itself. The groaning of wooden frames as the first aces put their aircraft through daring maneuvers in World War I evolved into the roar of jet engines as today's symbol of air superiority, the F-22 *Raptor* takes flight in today's skies. Throughout its existence, the 1st has led the way in the development of air weapons and air power tactics. From the battlefields of World War I to the skies over Iraq, the men and women of the 1st Fighter Wing set the standard for others to follow. This pamphlet highlights significant events in the 1 FW's history and several of the wing's key Alumni.

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*1st Pursuit Wing Staff in France, from left to right: Lt K.W. Zahner, Lt C.J. Hewitt, Capt Philip Roosevelt, Col B.M. Atkinson, Capt John Wentworth, Lt R.F. Linquest, Lt C.W. Alexander.*

## **World War I**

During World War I, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) included pilots who would fly alongside their European counterparts in reconnaissance, escort, and eventually combat missions. In 1918 America would officially enter the war and bring with her a wave of new pilots as well as the hopes of all the allies that the tide of war would finally turn in their favor. What the Americans did not bring with them though were aircraft. The fledgling aircraft industry in America had only begun to get off the ground when Americans began sailing for Europe and even though thousands of aircraft were produced, the war ended before these machines could make any difference at the front. American squadrons instead continued to use the aircraft built by the British and French including Nieuports and SPADs. Nevertheless there were cockpits to be filled, an enemy to fight and a war to be won. There were Americans willing to do the job. On 16

January 1918, Brig. General Benjamin D. Foulois, Chief of Air Service, AEF, ordered an Army officer by the name of Major Bert M. Atkinson to organize a small group of American aviators into the 1st Pursuit Organization and Training Center. Five months later, on 5 May 1918, the 1st Pursuit Group (PG), precursor to today's 1st Fighter Wing, activated. Officers from the 1st Pursuit Organization and Training Center filled most of the new group's staff positions. The 1 PG eventually inherited five aero squadrons: the 27th, 94th, 95th, 147th, and 185th.<sup>1</sup> Major Bert Atkinson's new title became: Commander, 1st Pursuit Group.



The new American pilots learned quickly to fly their French SPADs and Nieuport 28s in combat. On Sunday 14 April 1918 Lieutenants Douglas Campbell (left, above) and Alan Winslow (left, below) became the first members of the Allied Expeditionary Force to earn aerial kills against the enemy by downing a Pfalz D-3 and Albatross D-5 respectively. Aircrews serving in the 1st PG's squadrons earned 303 aerial victory credits during World War I.<sup>2</sup> The 1st received seven campaign credits. Many aviation pioneers and legends served with the 1st Pursuit Group in France and two members earned the Medal of Honor for their actions: 2Lt Frank Luke Jr. and 1Lt Edward V. "Eddie" Rickenbacker.

<sup>1</sup> In 1924 the 94th Pursuit Squadron and the 103d Aero Squadron consolidated and kept the 94th designation; in 1936 the 147th Pursuit Squadron and the 17th Aero Squadron consolidated and kept the 17th designation. Neither the 103d's nor the 17th's WWI statistics were included in this pamphlet.

<sup>2</sup> The actual number of enemy aircraft and balloons shot down by the 1 PG is just over 200. Under WWI victory credit policy, if two pilots combined to kill one enemy plane, both would receive one credit. See the AFHRA web site for additional information: <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/afhra/>.





Lt. Frank Luke posing behind a captured German machine gun.

### ***2Lt Frank Luke***

Nicknamed the "Arizona Balloon Buster," Frank Luke was known as one of the most fearless pilots in the group. The 27th Aero Squadron ace specialized in attacking enemy balloons. Perhaps no one was any better at this dangerous work than Luke.

Attacking balloons was risky because they floated at known altitudes and were often protected by mobile flak batteries. Nevertheless, during a 17-day period, Luke shot down 18 enemy balloons and aircraft. On what became his final mission, Luke earned the Medal of Honor while on a search and destroy mission for enemy balloons along the

front. On this mission, Luke shot down three balloons and two enemy Fokkers before enemy fire hit his aircraft. Upon descent, Luke strafed a German unit, followed by a forced landing. As German troops attempted to capture him, he drew his pistol, and died in the ensuing gun battle. Luke became the first recipient of the Medal of Honor for aerial combat.

### ***1Lt Eddie Rickenbacker***

Rickenbacker already had a degree of fame in the United States as a celebrated race car driver when he arrived at the 94th Pursuit Squadron. He earned a name for himself quickly though engaging against the Flying Circus and earning several kills.

Eddie Rickenbacker displayed a more scientific and methodical approach to his flying. Rickenbacker described his first encounter with the enemy this way, "The sun glinted off their scarlet noses. I felt a little



Lt. Rickenbacker beside a SPAD XIII

chill. Those red noses identified the most famous squadron in the war, the dread “Flying Circus”. And they outnumbered me three to one. I recognized them as the finest fliers I had ever faced. I did some fancy flying too, from sheer fright. The four of us whipped our ships around through the air for several minutes. They wanted to shoot me down; I wanted to get away.”<sup>3</sup>



By approaching aviation much the same way he approached auto racing Rickenbacker was able to overcome his initial fears, “My experiences in racing contests led me to believe that in the air, as on the race course, I should find a great difference in individual antagonists. Some of them would be better than I, and some of them poorer: from all of them I would be able to pick up, here and there, certain tricks and improvements which might improve my own abilities.”<sup>4</sup> By doing so, Rickenbacker would become America’s “Ace of Aces” in the First World War shooting down a total of twenty-six aircraft--a very impressive score considering he only flew for the last six months of the war.

At one point, thanks to Luke’s success, the 27th Aero Squadron moved ahead of the 94th in confirmed kills. Rickenbacker challenged the 94th not to allow another “American squadron at the front...approach the [94th’s] margin of air supremacy.” Within a week, the 94th had re-taken the lead. While on voluntary patrol over French lines, Rickenbacker single-handedly dove upon and attacked seven enemy aircraft. Rickenbacker scored kills on two of the planes, causing the retreat of the remaining five.

Rickenbacker’s post war exploits are enough to fill a book on their own. From plane crashes and harrowing tales of survival at sea to owning and operating racetracks and airlines, Eddie Rickenbacker lived an American dream and his legacy and fame have endured. He is undoubtedly the most famous American fighter pilot and arguably second only to Richthofen. But Rickenbacker would never have achieved the success he did had it not been for the teaching, training and mentoring of Raoul Lufbery.

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<sup>3</sup> Rickenbacker, E.V. (1967). *Rickenbacker: An Autobiography*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.. p.146

<sup>4</sup> Rickenbacker, Edward. *Fighting the Flying Circus*. (1965). Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. P.145

### *Major Gervais Raoul Lufbery*



Lufbery is one of the more remarkable pilots of the war. Due to his French ancestry he is often listed as a French ace. Born in France and an immigrant to America, he considered himself American. His service included time in the Lafayette Escadrille as well as the American Air Service. His official count stands at 17 confirmed aircraft downed. Those who knew and flew with him claimed his actual total to be no less than twice what he is credited with. Eddie Rickenbacker once said, “Simply to be in his presence was an honor. Everything I learned, I learned from Lufbery”<sup>5</sup>.

Lufbery was close to his comrades in the Lafayette Escadrille but as the war dragged on, and more of his friends died, he tended to keep to himself preferring time alone with the lion cub mascots, Whiskey and Soda, to the newer pilots. The death of his comrades angered him and he would at times become depressed and sometimes deliberately vengeful. Rickenbacker described one of Lufbery’s vengeful streaks after he learned his friend Jimmy Hall had been shot down (Hall had actually survived), “Luf spoke to nobody and no one spoke to him. He climbed into the plane and took off. He went deep into German territory. He spotted three German planes. He attacked. One Boche went down, and the other two fled. Luf barely made it back to the field. Jimmy Hall was avenged”<sup>6</sup>.



While chasing a wounded and disabled German two-seater, his gas tank was struck by a bullet and the aircraft was engulfed in flames. Since the engagement occurred so close to the aerodrome from which Lufbery was flying, it was

<sup>5</sup> Rickenbacker, Edward. *Rickenbacker*. p.117

<sup>6</sup> Rickenbacker, Edward. *Rickenbacker*. p.128



witnessed by numerous members of the 94<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron of which Lufbery was now a member of. One pilot described the scene as it unfolded in front of them: “The Nieuport burst into flames. I could see that Lufbery was endeavoring to bring the plane down sideways in order to blow the flames away from himself, but apparently to no avail. When he was still about two thousand feet in the air, it became obvious he could no longer stand the heat...(he chose) to leap out of the cockpit...to his death by crashing on the ground rather than to be burned alive in the air”<sup>7</sup>. When his comrades went to retrieve his body shortly thereafter, they found it was nowhere near the wreckage. He had already been collected by local villagers and taken to the town hall where the members of his squadron found him covered in flowers.

Lufbery’s funeral was a very special affair. Col Frank P. Lahm, of Brig. Gen. Mitchell’s staff, gives us an excellent account from his diary entry that day:

“Mon, May 20. Today I have seen one of the most impressive ceremonies of all my life. It was Lufbery’s funeral. Huffer, Peterson and Marr, the last two old Lafayette flyers with Lufbery, were the American pall bearers—there were three French aviators on the other side. With one of our bands, a company of the 26th Div., a French infantry company, a squad of Moroccan division, officers and nurses, we marched to the American cemetery not far from the hospital. Toward the close, one by one they (Nieuports flying overhead) throttled their motors, spiraled gracefully down, passed over our heads only a little way up and each as he went by scattered a handful of flowers that fluttered down around the grave”<sup>8</sup>.



The first pilot to drop down and release his flowers over the funeral was Eddie Rickenbacker. Rickenbacker recalled, “Returning to our vacant aerodrome and we sorrowfully realized that America’s greatest aviator and ace of aces had been laid away for his last rest”<sup>9</sup>.

On 10 November 1918, Maj Maxwell Kirby of the 94th recorded the last aerial victory of the "Great War." The next day, Germany signed the Armistice, ending four years of brutal warfare. With no enemy to fight, and free time on their hands before returning to the states, the pilots and maintainers of the 1st Pursuit Group took time to garishly decorate their aircraft in a phenomenon that became known as the “Showbird SPADs.”



Two Showbird SPADs from the 94th, 1918

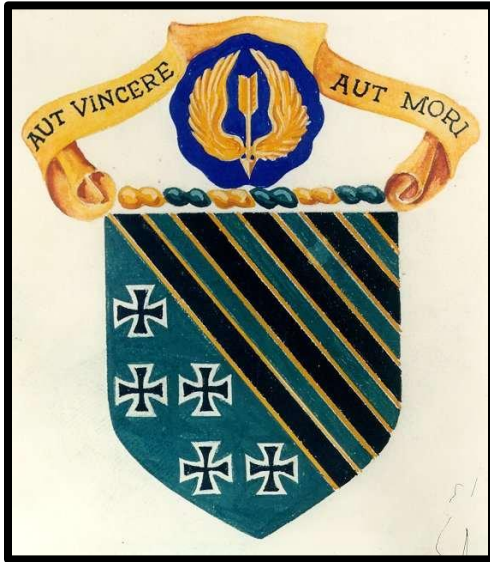
## The Inter-War Years



The end in hostilities brought upon the Air Service a massive reduction in personnel and the inactivation of many units. Preserved through such changes was the 1st Pursuit Group and on 22 August 1919, the War Department reorganized it at Selfridge Field, Michigan.

With the exception of the period covering August 1919 to July 1921, when the group moved to Kelly and Ellington Fields in Texas, the Group was based at

Selfridge where it remained until Japan drew America into World War II. Nevertheless, during the inter-war years, the group's pilots honed their fighter tactics and flying skills. The Group also participated in activities ranging from air races and testing new aircraft, to delivering the mail.



On 10 February 1924, the Adjutant General approved the 1st Pursuit Group's emblem.<sup>7</sup> The new emblem found its way around the country and into Canada in the 1920s and 30s as the group flew numerous training, test, and operational missions. Some of the most interesting tests conducted by the group were cold weather tests. Group members tolerated harsh winter conditions operating in the northern United States and Canada. On one typical mission, in January 1930, the group deployed several aircraft to "test the efficiency of planes, personnel,

and equipment under the most severe winter conditions." The flight originated from Selfridge on the 10th and arrived at Minot, North Dakota, on the 11th. That night, the temperature dropped to -20°F. Maintenance issues plagued the group as it traveled west toward Washington. On 19 January, the group commander, Maj Ralph Royce, telegraphed, "Having battled forces of King Winter [for] ten days and won from them the secrets of how they intend to aid enemies of the United States in wartime, the First Pursuit...stands defiantly on the ice of Newman Lake, 15 miles east of Spokane...". During the 1930s the 95th and 17th Squadrons transferred from the Group. In their place, on 1 January 1941, the 71st Pursuit Squadron joined the 27th and 94th as the fighting units of the 1st Pursuit Group. In 1941 the group also received the Army Air Corps' first P-38 *Lightning*. On 5 December, the group deployed to March Field, California, on a 90 day temporary duty assignment. The group was en route when it learned about Pearl Harbor.

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<sup>7</sup> The 1 FW's Lineage and Honors history from the US Air Force Historical Research agency show the emblem was originally approved on 10 February 1924.

## World War II

On 7 December 1941, when the United States was thrust in World War II, the 1st Pursuit Group was transitioning into a new aircraft - the P-38 *Lightning*. Only six months earlier, in July, the 27th Pursuit Squadron received the first P-38s in the Army Air Corp's inventory. The United States wanted to protect the West coast from any further Japanese attacks and called on the 1st to move from Selfridge to March Field, California. During its short time at March Field, the Army Air Corps slowly plucked personnel from the 1st and assigned them to other units. The group lost over half of its assigned officers and enlisted men. Short of men and morale, the group prepared to deploy for Europe on 25 April 1942. Before leaving, however, a group alumnus, Eddie Rickenbacker, visited with the troops. The retired captain listened to the group's concerns and reported them to General Henry "Hap" Arnold. Rickenbacker also worked with Arnold to reinstate the hat-in-the ring emblem, absent since Rickenbacker himself claimed the right to it when he retired. The "Hat-in-the-Ring" emblem replaced the "Indian head" the unit had been using in the Inter-war period. When the 94<sup>th</sup> returned to combat it would once again carry the red, white, and blue Uncle Sam's hat.

In 1942, military strategists decided that Hitler's Germany posed a greater threat than Japan and placed first priority on the war in Europe. As a result, the newly designated 1st Fighter Group deployed to England as part of Operation BOLERO. In July of 1942, six P-38s belonging to the 94 Fighter Squadron crash landed on Greenland due to severe weather. Although every crew member was rescued, the aircraft were

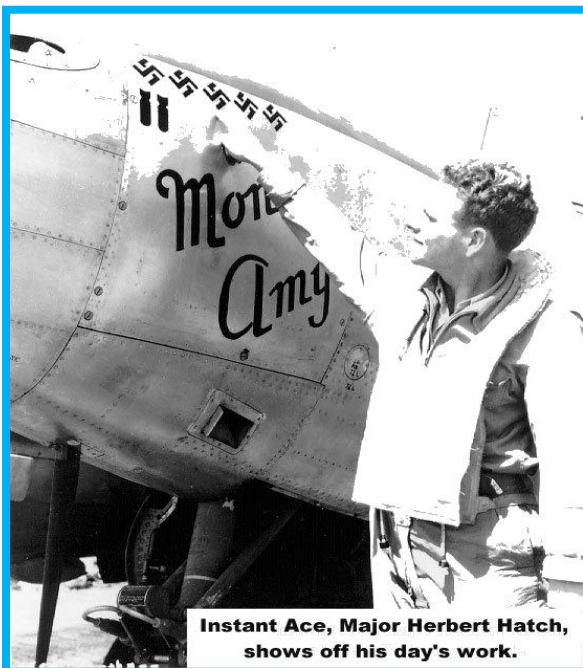


abandoned. One of these aircraft was recovered in the early 2000s, and restored. The aircraft now travels the United States under the name "*Glacier Girl*."

During the summer of 1942, the 1st flew training missions and occasional

fighter sweeps over the skies of France. The group received the call to move again, this time to North Africa. By 13 November 1942, the group completed the move to Algeria, where it provided aerial support against German occupied territories.

On 29 November 1942, the 94th Fighter Squadron flew the group's first combat sorties of World War II, strafing a German airfield and recording several aerial victories. However, as the year came to a close, the Group's morale sagged. Few replacement parts and virtually no replacement aircraft were available. Although the group recorded some kills, the tally against the enemy was even at best. For nearly a year, the 1st moved throughout Algeria and Tunisia, flying bomber escort and providing air coverage for the ground campaign. Allied forces pushed the Germans back, and the North African campaign ended with the capture of Tunis on 7 May 1943.



Six months of continuous, heavy fighting in North Africa was followed by a short break, flying reconnaissance and escort missions around the Mediterranean. The respite ended on 15 August as air attacks increased against southern Italy. On 25 August, after much practice, the 1st launched 65 aircraft and joined with 85 more for a historic attack against the Italian airfield complex at Foggia. In addition to strafing ground targets, pilots of the 1st damaged or destroyed 88 enemy aircraft, while losing only two P-38s. For this mission, the group received its first Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC). Five days

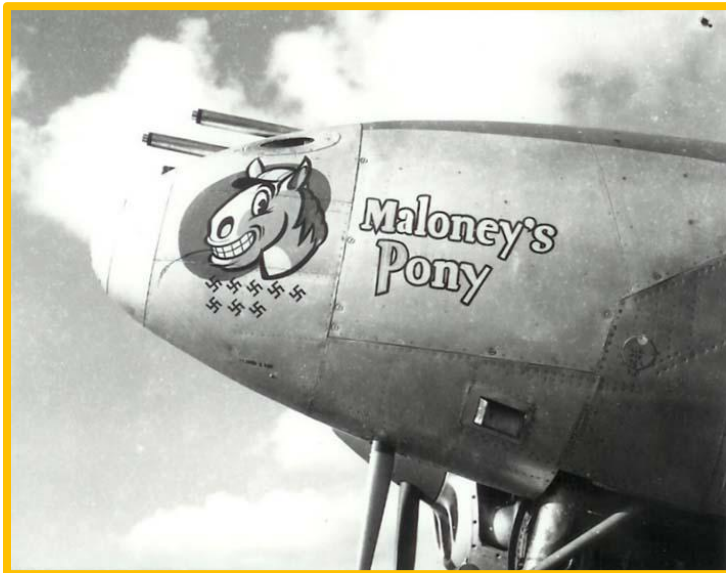
later, the group participated in a mission earning their second DUC. The 1st launched a 44-ship formation, escorting B-26 bombers to the railroad marshalling yards at Aversa, Italy. Approximately 75-100 aircraft suddenly attacked the formation. Outnumbered two to one, the Group persevered through a 40-minute air battle. Although losses were even on both sides, the bombing mission continued, unabated. As a result, the escorted bombers struck their target and returned to base without a loss. The Group hopped from base to base in Italy before settling at Salsola Airfield on 8 January 1944. Living and



supply conditions improved for the Airmen, who received new P-38Js in the spring. On 16 April 1944, the group flew its 1,000th combat mission.

The 1st Fighter Group received its third DUC for action on 18 May 1944. That day's target was the oil fields at Ploesti, Romania. The fighters were scheduled to escort 700 bombers. However, bad weather caused many bombers to abort the mission. Nonetheless, the fighters continued through the heavy weather in case any bombers had continued to the target. When the P-38s reached the target, 140 American bombers were under attack by 80 enemy fighters. The Group's 48 P-38s attacked the German fighters, driving them off. The pilots shot down and damaged nearly 20 enemy aircraft while losing only one P-38, whose pilot parachuted to safety.

### **Lt Thomas E. Maloney**



The 27th's highest scoring Ace of WWII, Lt. Thomas E. Maloney, endured one of the grittiest personal episodes of WWII. While strafing, he lost one engine to ground fire and headed back to base. Three or four miles off the coast of France, his other engine failed, forcing him to ditch. During the night, Maloney drifted to shore. Not sure whether the beach was occupied by the enemy or not, he stayed

near the water's edge until dawn. Then, he carefully picked his way inland, looking for signs of mines. The beach had been mined for some time, but over time the sand had resumed its normal appearance. Maloney triggered one off. He survived, but both legs were nearly shattered by metal fragments. For 10 days he lay helpless, crawling a little, eating a little, drinking from his canteen until the water was gone. Finally a French farmer found him. When he was flown back to the States, a dozen aircraft from the 27th Fighter Squadron intercepted the airplane and escorted him a hundred miles out over the Mediterranean. Then, one by one, they peeled off and went back to war. In honor of

Maloney, it was ordered that airplane number 23 should evermore be named "Maloney's Pony."

The remainder of the war proved less eventful for the Group. On 11 August 1944, the 1st deployed sixty aircraft to Corsica, assisting in Operation DRAGOON the allied invasion of Southern France. The group's last major operation of the war came in January 1945. Under Operation Argonaut, the 1st escorted British and American delegations to the Yalta Conference. A total of 61 aircraft escorted the ships and aircraft carrying President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and their aides to and from the Crimea. On 15 April 1945, the 27th Fighter Squadron, who earlier scored the group's first kill of the war, recorded the group's last kill of the war. During nearly three years of combat flying, the 1st Fighter Group flew over 21,000 sorties on over 1,400 combat missions.

When the United States demobilized shortly after the war, the 1st Fighter Group fell victim to downsizing and inactivated for a short time. However, with its tradition and heritage, this inactivation proved to be brief and its reconstitution brought it to the forefront of America's jet age. Returning to March Field, California, the group once again made history when it was assigned America's first operational jet fighter, the P-80 "Shooting Star". Shortly afterward, the arsenal would evolve into the P-86 "Sabre". After its independence in September 1947, the Air Force changed the pursuit designation to fighter - thus the P-86 became the F-86.

## **The Cold War Era**

The 24 years following World War II were chaotic for the 1st Fighter Group. During this period, the group was assigned under the newly created 1st Fighter Wing, worked for three different numbered air forces, three regional air defense organizations, an air division, and four major commands. In addition, the Group made three permanent change of station moves. During the summer of 1947, the Army Air Force issued the "Wing-Base" plan, also known as the Hobson Plan, creating a self-sufficient wing at each base. As a result, on 15 August 1947, the 1st Fighter Wing was activated at March Field, California. The 1st Fighter Group, with the 27th, 71st, and 94th Fighter Squadrons were

assigned under the Wing. In addition, maintenance, supply, and support organizations fell under the Wing's control.

In January 1950, while stationed at George AFB, California, the 1st created its own aerial demonstration team, the "Sabre Dancers." The team, composed of five pilots from the 27th, flew its most prestigious show on 22 April 1950, at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The large audience included President Harry S. Truman, and a litany of political leaders. During the Korean War, the 1st



served in the air defense role while the wing's elements split to opposite coasts. The 1st Fighter Interceptor Group Headquarters and the 27th and 71st Fighter Interceptor Squadrons were assigned to the Eastern Air Defense Force, while the wing headquarters and the 94th Fighter Interceptor Squadron served with the Western Air Defense Force. After the cease-fire, the Wing returned to a more traditional organization. With exception of the 27th, the Wing, Group, and most of its squadrons reunited at Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan. The 27th remained on the East Coast, flying the F-106 "Delta Dart" from Loring, Maine. Meanwhile, the 94th and 71st transitioned from the F-86 to the F-102 "Delta Dagger." In response to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the wing deployed personnel and aircraft to Patrick AFB, Florida, in October 1962. During their six-week stay at Patrick, the 1st flew 620 sorties maintaining an 80 percent mission capable rating.

During the Vietnam War, the wing served as a transition unit for many pilots en route to or returning from Southeast Asia. As the decade came to a close, the units split again, serving across the nation: the 27th in Maine, the 71st in Montana, and the 94th in Michigan. In order to maintain the historic 1st Fighter Wing, and provide a new combat training unit necessitated by the Vietnam War, Tactical Air Command inactivated the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing, and activated the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, on 1 October 1970. The personnel and equipment formerly of the 15th now served under the 1st. The three flying squadrons, the 45th, 46th, and 47th formally of the 15th, were assigned under the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing but would shortly compete for historic squadron numbers.

Completing the Wing's historic preservation, the commanders of the three squadrons participated in a shoot-out at the Avon Park Gunnery Range to determine which squadrons would receive the designations of the 27th, 71st, and 94th. The commander of the 47th marked the highest score, and chose the 94th; the 46th placed second, choosing the 27th, leaving the 45th with the squadron having the shortest history, the 71st. As a result of the hostilities in Vietnam the wing received a new mission: to "conduct combat aircrew academic and flight training in the tactics, techniques, and operations of assigned aircrew and associate equipment." The wing trained aircrews on the F-4E "Phantom II" and the B-57 "Canberra." After completing training, most pilots continued onto service in Southeast Asia.

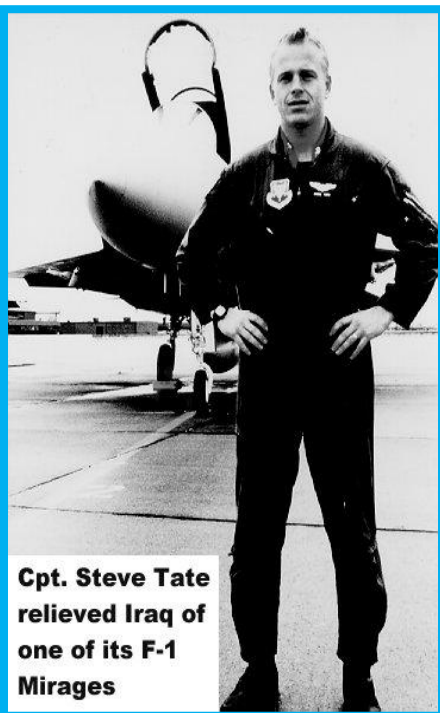
On 14 March 1974, the Air Force publicly announced plans to station the Air Force's first operational F-15 wing at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. Langley was chosen due to its heritage and ideal location for Tactical Air Command's secondary air defense mission. After studying the heritage of its wings, Tactical Air Command selected the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing as the unit to receive the first *Eagle*. Therefore, the nation's most historic base and wing united to receive the Air Force's newest air weapon. On 6 June 1975, Tactical Air Command directed the Ninth Air Force to move the 1st Fighter Wing, and its associate squadrons, from MacDill to Langley Air Force Base.

Although the designation of the unit moved, the majority of MacDill personnel remained in place and served under the newly designated 56th Tactical Fighter Wing. First Tactical Fighter Wing personnel, under the command of Col Larry D. Welch (who went on to become the Air Force Chief of Staff), spent the next six months preparing for the arrival of the F-15. By the end of 1975, the wing was ready for its new air superiority weapon. On 18 December 1975, Lt Col John Britt, Operations Officer, flew the wing's first F-15 (a two-seat trainer) into Langley. Official welcoming ceremonies were held on 9 January 1976, when Lt Col Larry Craft, 27th Fighter Squadron Commander, landed with the wing's first single seat F-15. In recognition of its accomplishment of introducing the F-15 into the Air Force's operational inventory, the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing received its first Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, for the period 1 July 1975-31 October 1976. After achieving operational ready status, the wing took its experience and put it to use on a program nicknamed "Ready Eagle." During Ready Eagle, the 1st helped prepare the 36th Tactical Fighter Wing at Bitburg Air Base, Germany, for its

reception of the F-15. The 1st assisted in the training of maintenance personnel and pilots. By 23 September 1977, the wing provided Bitburg with 88 operational ready pilots, 522 maintenance specialists, and later trained an additional 1,100 maintenance troops at Bitburg.

On 15 April 1977, the 1st acquired another mission when it assumed responsibility over the 6th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, previously assigned under the 4500th Air Base Wing at Langley. The 6th flew EC-135 airborne command posts in support of Atlantic Command missions. Even with its new larger mission, the 1st continued to gain experience with the F-15. After showcasing the still new fighter across the United States, the wing participated in an exercise dubbed "Coronet Condor." The 94th deployed eight aircraft to Japan, Korea, and the Philippines in the spring of 1978, and the 94th and 71st deployed 18 Eagles to the Netherlands in the fall of the same year. After returning from Europe in early 1979, the 94th deployed 12 aircraft on a short-notice exercise to Saudi Arabia under "Prized Eagle," and the 27th took its turn, deploying in the spring to Korea and Japan. Participation in world-wide deployments and training exercises would soon pay dividends as Iraq threatened its region.

## The Gulf War



**Cpt. Steve Tate relieved Iraq of one of its F-1 Mirages**

The training and experience gained, especially from PRIZED EAGLE, was called upon in the summer of 1990 after Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. On 7 August 1990, the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing was among the first to deploy when both the 27th and 71st Tactical Fighter Squadrons began deploying to Saudi Arabia under Operation DESERT SHIELD. In all, the wing deployed 48 aircraft to the Persian Gulf. By 16 January 1991, when DESERT SHIELD came to a close, the Wing amassed 4,207 sorties.

On 17 January 1991 at 0115 Saudi Arabia time, , 16 1st Tactical Fighter Wing F-15s departed King Abdul-Aziz Air Base for Iraq to participate in Operation DESERT STORM, the liberation of Kuwait. During the first night of the operation,



Captain Steve Tate of the 71st Tactical Fighter Squadron shot down an Iraqi F-1 Mirage. This kill became the first combat credit awarded to the wing since World War II. Upon its return on 8 March 1991, the 1st had amassed a total of 2,564 sorties during Operation DESERT STORM. Nevertheless, the end of the Gulf War did not bring an end to the wing's support in Southwest Asia.

Monitoring the southern no-fly zone, the 1st provided six-month coverage every year under Operation SOUTHERN WATCH. In October 1994, when Saddam Hussein tested U.S. resolve by placing forces near the Kuwaiti border, the wing participated in a short-notice deployment known as Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR. When Iraqi troop movements began again in September 1996, the wing was prepared to deploy under Operation DESERT FOCUS.

## Setting the Standard

Following the end of the cold war, the Air Force underwent several reorganizations. On 1 October 1991, the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing redesignated as the 1st Fighter Wing. On 1 June 1992, Air Combat Command activated, combining forces from Tactical Air Command and Strategic Air Command into a new command providing "Global Reach, Global Power for America."



Marking the end of the cold war in July 1992, the wing hosted the first leg of a Russian-American fighter exchange. Thirty-seven members of the Russian Air Force, two Su-27 fighters and one IL-76 transport deployed to Langley Air Force Base. Two months later, two F-15s and 40 wing members visited Lipetsk Air Base, Russia.

During the early 1990s, the 1st Fighter Wing assumed responsibility of three new missions: air control, airlift, and search and rescue. On 15 March 1992, the 74th Air Control Squadron transferred to the 1st Fighter Wing. The 74th provided command and control of air operations worldwide. One year later, on 1 February 1993, the 41st and 71st Rescue Squadrons, along with the 741st Maintenance Squadron, became the newest

members of the 1st Fighter Wing team. Stationed at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, the units provided search and rescue for NASA's space shuttle missions, and support of combat search and rescue operations in Southwest Asia. Additionally, C-21 operational support aircraft were assigned to the wing on 1 April 1993 with the establishment of Detachment 1, 1st Operations Group. On 1 May, the detachment inactivated and the 12th Airlift Flight, with the same mission, activated.

Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR demonstrated the need for the Air Force to provide combat air power anywhere in the world, at a moment's notice. This need created the concept of the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF). During AEF II, the 1st Fighter Wing deployed 12 F-15s and over 600 personnel to Shaheed Mwaffaq Air Base, Jordan. From 12 April-28 June 1996, wing members built and operated from the bare base, and provided support to Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.



The 1st Fighter Wing experienced the danger of cowardly attacks from terrorists on 25 June 1996. A bomb, attached to a fuel truck, exploded outside the Khobar Towers housing area, in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The bomb took the lives of 19 Air Force members, including five airmen of the 71st Rescue Squadron: Capt Christopher J. Adams, Capt Leland T. Haun, MSgt Michael

G. Heiser, SSgt Kevin J. Johnson, and A1C Justin R. Wood. President William Clinton attended memorial services, and called terrorism "the enemy of peace and freedom."

Two realignments ordered by Air Combat Command took effect on 1 April 1997. The most substantial one had been the 1st Rescue Group's reassignment to the 347th Wing at Moody Air Force Base. This move meant the loss of two types of aircraft, the HC-130P "Hercules" gunship, and the HH-60G "Pave Hawk" helicopter. When the Air Force decided to transfer the 12th Airlift Flight to Air Mobility Command, another type of aircraft, the C-21, vanished from the 1st Fighter Wing's inventory. Additionally, the 6 ACCS inactivated as its Cold War mission ended. As the wing's mission focused on fighters and AEF deployments, the world watched in horror as Serbian insurgents

committed human rights atrocities in the Balkans. Once again, the men and women of the 1st Fighter Wing were called.

## **The Balkan War**

Operation NOBLE ANVIL, the U.S. portion of the NATO operation to stop ethnic cleansing of Albanians and Serbians, once again taxed the wing. Although no aircraft deployed, over 150 personnel from 11 units within the 1st Fighter Wing deployed to the European theater in direct support of the operation. Responsible for the worldwide mobility commitment to execute command and control operations, the 74th Air Control Squadron provided the largest contingent of 1st Fighter Wing personnel and equipment to Operation NOBLE ANVIL. Deploying in May 1999, the 74th set up its equipment outside Budapest, Hungary, to provide joint forces and theater commanders with an accurate air picture for conducting offensive and defensive missions.



## **The War Against Terror**

On 11 September 2001, terrorists from Al Qaeda suddenly and cruelly attacked the United States. Nineteen terrorist boarded four passenger jets posing as passengers. One by one, the terrorists hijacked the aircraft. Then the unimaginable occurred--the terrorists aimed the passenger laden aircraft into some of America's most treasured landmarks. The first struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center and 20 minutes later, the second plane hit the South tower. The third plane dove into the Pentagon. Hearing of the fate of the other planes, the passengers on the fourth plane acted against the terrorists. That plane crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people, mostly civilians, died during the attacks. This act of war would not go unanswered.

That same day, the 1st Fighter Wing responded to protect America's air space from further terrorist attacks. 1st Fighter Wing personnel secured the base, donated blood, and pitched in wherever possible. In what became known as Operation NOBLE

EAGLE, wing aircraft provided air cover over several major cities, including New York City and Washington, DC. At the same time, hundreds of wing members deployed to support the global war on terror.

## **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM**

For over a decade after DESERT STORM, the wing responded each time Saddam Hussein shook his sword while violating the resolutions established by the UN Security Council. In a speech on 16 October 2002, President George W. Bush stated, “Iraq will either comply with the UN resolutions, rid itself of



*1st Fighter Wing F-15s at a deployed location during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM prepare for takeoff.*

weapons of mass destruction, and end its support for terrorists, or it will be compelled to do so. I hope that Iraq will choose peace and compliance.”

After four additional months of waiting for Iraq to disarm and to meet UN resolutions, the US began building forces in the Persian Gulf region as a show of determination. As part of the buildup, the 1st Fighter Wing deployed a main contingent of a dozen F-15s and more than 600 people to the region. Iraq continued its rhetoric but never complied and President Bush ordered US troops into action on 19 March 2003. Wing aircraft, charged with gaining and maintaining air superiority, sprang into action. The wing flew 360 sorties intimidating the Iraqi Air Force not to only staying on the ground but in some cases burying its planes under it. The resounding success of the air campaign and the end of patrols over Iraq provided the wing more time at home to prepare for the arrival of the *F-22 Raptor*.

## **Fifth Generation**

Given the history of the 1st Fighter Wing, it was no surprise Air Force leadership publicly announced on 15 January 2002 plans for the wing to bring the F-22 into combat operational status. Preceding its arrival, massive efforts by the Army Corps of engineers, the 1st Fighter Wing, and various contractors led to a major 5<sup>th</sup> generation transformation



along Langley's flight line. These changes included demolition and reconstruction of new hangers, a new base operations center, a simulator complex, wing storage tank facility and a low observable composite repair facility. These activities carried on amidst upgrades in the base infrastructure and many other construction projects on base. Furthermore, damage from Hurricane Isabel brought in even further demand for building and landscaping personnel. Despite all this activity, by the end of 2004 the wing stood



ready for its new mission.

The first *Raptor* assigned to the 1st Fighter Wing arrived on 7 January 2005. Like the F-15, this aircraft was meant to be used as a trainer and as such, was docked in a hangar for maintenance personnel to familiarize themselves with its complex systems. The second *Raptor*, this one meant for flying operations, arrived on 18 January 2005 to open up

yet another chapter in the history of the 1st Fighter Wing. The first squadron to transition from the F-15 to the F-22 was the 27<sup>th</sup> fighter Squadron. once again this linked America's most historic wing and oldest fighter squadron with its newest aircraft. On 15 December 2005, General Ronald Keys, Commander of Air Combat Command, declared the 27th FS initially operationally ready with the F-22A *Raptor*. One day later, on 16 December 2005, the 94th FS bid farewell to its F-15 mission, taking on the task of becoming certified in the F-22A. Since that date in 2005, the 1st Fighter Wing has continued to expand its compliment of F-22A aircraft while the *Raptor* has flexed its wings and sharpened its claws by participating in NORTHERN EDGE, RED FLAG, COMBAT ARCHER, and COMBAT HAMMER exercises. In 2007, twelve F-22s from the 27th FS deployed to Kadena Air Force Base, Japan as part of the *Raptor*'s first-ever AEF deployment. In 2009 the 27th FS deployed to Central Command for the *Raptor*'s first visit to the desert. 2010 brought forth the end of an era as the final F-15 squadron, the 71st "Ironmen" inactivated on 30 September. On Thursday the 2nd of September 2010 the final two F-15s took off from Langley AFB bringing to a close over 440,000 sorties for over 660,000 flying hours and 34 years of vaunted service.



The leaders of the 1st Fighter Wing have gone on to become leaders of our nation's Air Force including Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chiefs of Staff, Major Command commanders and multiple Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. At the start of 2010, the First Fighter Wing continues its decades long performance of service to the nation and continues to be worthy of the moniker: America's First Team!



During nine decades of service, the 1st Fighter Wing carved its niche in U.S. air history.

For its part, the 1st Fighter Wing was:

- The first U.S. group level unit to enter air combat.
- The first U.S. unit to destroy an enemy aircraft in World War I.
- The parent unit of the first recipient of the Medal of Honor for aerial combat.
- The parent unit of the highest scoring US ace in World War I.
- The only U.S. Army fighter group from 1919 to 1932.
- The first unit equipped with the Lockheed P-38 Lightning.
- The first fighter unit to deploy en masse over the North Atlantic.
- The first American unit to destroy a German aircraft in World War II (the group shared the victory with another unit.)
- The first U.S. jet fighter unit.
- The first operational unit to fly the F-15 Eagle.
- The first tactical fighter unit to deploy to Saudi Arabia in support of DESERT SHIELD.
- The first operational unit to fly the F-22 Raptor

## **Appendix 1: Commanders**

### **Group**

Maj Bert M. Atkinson - 5 May 1918  
Maj Harold E. Hartney - 21 Aug 1918  
Lt Col Davenport Johnson - 22 Aug 1919  
Capt Arthur R. Brooks - 29 June 1920  
Maj Carl Spaatz - 5 Oct 1920  
Capt Arthur R. Brooks - 25 Apr 1921  
Maj Carl Spaatz - 21 Dec 1921  
Maj Thomas G. Lanphier - Sep 1924  
Capt Vincent B. Dixon - 4 Feb 1926  
Maj Thomas B. Lanphier - 26 Jun 1926  
Maj Ralph Royce - 25 Aug 1928  
Lt Col Charles H. Danforth - c. 1930  
Maj Gerald E. Brower - c. 1930  
Maj Adlai H. Gilkeson - 18 Jul 1932  
Maj George H. Brett - 7 Oct 1932  
Lt Col Frank M. Andrews - 11 Jul 1933  
Maj Ralph Royce - 4 Oct 1934  
Maj Edwin J. House - 30 Apr 1937  
Col Henry B. Clagett - c. 1938  
Col Lawrence P. Hickey - c. 1939  
Lt. Col Robert S. Israel - Jul 1941  
Maj John O. Zahn - 1 May 1942  
Col John N. Stone - 9 Jul 1942  
Col Ralph S. Garman - 7 Dec 1942  
Maj Joseph S. Peddie - 8 Sep 1943  
Col Robert B. Richard - 19 Sep 1943  
Col Arthur C. Agan Jr. - 15 Nov 1944  
Lt Col Milton H. Ashkins - 31 Mar 1945  
Lt Col Charles W. Thaxton - 11 Apr 1945  
Col Milton H. Ashkins - 28 Apr 1945  
Col Bruce K. Holloway - 3 Jul 1946  
Col Gilbert L. Meyers - 20 Aug 1946  
Col Frank S. Perego - Jan 1948  
Lt Col Jack T. Bradley - Jul 1950  
Col Dolf E. Muehleisen - Jun 1951  
Col Walker M. Mahurin - 1951  
Capt Robert B. Bell - Jan 1952  
Col Norman S. Orwat - 1955  
Col John D. W. Haesler - (by Mar 1958)  
Col Edward S. Popek - 1 Jul 1960  
Col Wallace B. Frank - (by Sep 1960)

### **Wing**

Col Carl J. Crane - 15 Aug 1947  
Col Carl J. Crane - 15 Aug 1947  
Col Elvin F. Maughn - 19 Jan 1948

Col Clifford H. Rees - 17 May 1948  
Col Joseph H. Davidson - 13 Jan 1949  
Col George McCoy Jr. - 14 Jun 1949  
Col William L. Lee - 19 Aug 1949  
Col Wiley D. Ganey - 4 Jan 1950  
Brig Gen Donald R. Hutchinson - c. 17 Oct 1950  
Col Dolf E. Muehleisen - 14 Dec 1950  
Col Robert F. Worley - c. Jun 1951  
Col Glenn E. Duncan - 18 Oct 1956  
Col Charles D. Sonnkalb - c. Aug 1959  
Col George J. LaBreche - c. Dec 1960  
Col Ralph G. Taylor Jr. - 15 Jun 1962  
Col Converse B. Kelly - 16 Sep 1963  
Col Kenneth E. Rosebush - c. Aug 1966  
Col Taras T. Popovich - 29 Apr 1968  
Col Morris B. Pitts - c. 31 Oct 1969  
unknown - c. 31 Dec 1969  
Col Mervin M. Taylor - Jan 1970  
Col Travis R. McNeil - 1 Oct 1970  
Col Robert F. Titus - 1 Mar 1971  
Col Howard W. Leaf - 6 May 1971  
Col Walter D. Druen Jr. - 1 Nov 1971  
Col Sydney L. Davis - 18 Apr 1972  
Col Gerald J. Carey Jr. - 25 Jun 1973  
Col Ernest A. Bedke - (by 30 Jun) 1975  
Lt Col George H. Miller - 1 Jul 1975  
Brig Gen Larry D. Welch - 1 Aug 1975  
Col John T. Chain Jr. - 1 Aug 1977  
Col Neil L. Eddins - 27 Mar 1978  
Col Donald L. Miller - 15 May 1979  
Brig Gen William T. Tolbert - 11 Aug 1980  
Brig Gen Eugene H. Fischer - 29 Jan 1982  
Brig Gen Henry Viccellio Jr - 6 Apr 1983  
Col Billy G. McCoy - 31 May 1985  
Col Buster C. Glosson - 10 Jul 1986  
Col Richard B. Myers - 11 Jun 1987  
Col John M. McBroom - 24 Feb 1989  
Col David J. McCloud - 27 Jun 1991  
Brig Gen Gregory S. Martin - 15 Jun 1993  
Brig Gen William R. Looney III - 23 May 1995  
Brig Gen Gary R. Dylewski - 10 Jul 1996  
Brig Gen Theodore W. Lay II - 21 Oct 1997  
Brig Gen(S) Felix Dupré - 7 Apr 1999  
Brig Gen(S) Stephen M. Goldfein - 10 Apr 2000  
Brig Gen (S) Stephen J. Miller - 11 Jan 2002  
Brig Gen (S) Frank Gorenc - 02 Sep 2003  
Brig Gen Burton M. Field - 15 June 2005  
Brig Gen Mark A. Barrett - 30 April 2007  
Col Matthew H. Molloy - 8 May 2009

## Appendix 2: Aircraft Flown

Nieuport (model 28)	1918	C-40	1939-1941
Spad XIII	1918-1922	P-38 "Lightning"	1941-1945
Sopwith F-1 Camel	1918	P (later F)-80 "Shooting Star"	1946-1949
SE-5	1919-1922	RF-80	1947-1949
JN-4 "Jenny"	1919-1924	FA (later, RB)-26 "Invader"	1947-1949
JN-6	1919-1924	L-13	1947-1949
DH-4	1919-1924	B-26 "Marauder"	1948-1949
PW-5	1919-1924	L-4	1948-1949
MB-3	1922-1925	L-5 "Sentinel"	1948-1949
PW-8	1924-1926	F-86 "Sabre"	1949-1960
P-1	1925-1931	B-29 "Super Fortress"	1949
P-2	1926-1937	F-51 "Mustang"	1951-1952
P-3	1926-1931	F-89 "Scorpion"	1952-1953
P-5	1926-1931	F-94 "Starfire"	1954-1960
P-6 "Hawk"	1928-	F/TF-102 "Delta Dagger"	1957-1960
1929,	1932, 1934	F-106 "Delta Dart"	1960-1970
	-1938	F-4E "Phantom II"	1970-1975
P-12	1930-1934	B-57 "Canberra"	1970-1973
P-16	1932-1934	B-57 "Canberra"	1970-1973
P-26	1934-1938	F-15 "Eagle"	1975-2010
P-30 (PB-2)	1934-1938	EC-135	1976-1992
P-35	1937-1941	UH-1 "Huey"	1987-1995
P-36	1938-1940	HC-130P "Hercules"	1993-1997
P-40	1939-1941	HH-3E "Jolly Green Giant"	1993-1994
P-41	c. 1941	C-21	1993-1997
P-43	c. 1941	HH-60G "Pave Hawk"	1994-1997
YP-43	1939-1941	F-22 "Raptor"	2005-Present

## Appendix 3: Lineage

### Group

5 May 1918	Organized as the 1st Pursuit Group at Gencoult, France.
24 Dec 1918	Demobilized at Colombey-les-Belles, France.
22 Aug 1919	Organized as the 1st Pursuit Group at Selfridge, Michigan.
9 Mar 1921	Redesignated 1st Group (Pursuit)
25 Jan 1923	Redesignated 1st Pursuit Group
8 Apr 1924	The Headquarters of the 1st Pursuit Group which had demobilized in France on 24 Dec 1918 was reconstituted and consolidated with the existing 1st Pursuit Group.
8 Aug 1926	Redesignated 1st Pursuit Group, Air Corps
1 Sep 1936	Redesignated 1st Pursuit Group
6 Dec 1939	Redesignated 1st Pursuit Group (Interceptor)
12 Mar 1941	Redesignated 1st Pursuit Group (Fighter)
15 May 1942	Redesignated 1st Fighter Group
16 Oct 1945	Inactivated at Lesine, Italy
3 Jul 1946	Activated at March Field, California
15 Aug 1947	Assigned to 1st Fighter Wing
16 Apr 1950	Redesignated as 1st Fighter-Interceptor Group
6 Feb 1952	Inactivated at Norton AFB, California
20 Jun 1955	Redesignated 1st Fighter Group (Air Defense)
18 Aug 1955	Activated at Selfridge AFB, Michigan
1 Feb 1961	Inactivated at Selfridge AFB, Michigan
31 Jul 1985	Redesignated 1st Tactical Fighter Group
1 Oct 1991	Redesignated 1st Operations Group and Activated at Langley AFB

### Wing

28 Jul 1947	Established as 1st Fighter Wing
15 Aug 1947	Organized and activated at March Field, California
16 Apr 1950	Redesignated 1st Fighter-Interceptor Wing
6 Feb 1952	Inactivated at Norton AFB, California
14 Sep 1956	Redesignated 1st Fighter Wing (Air Defense)
18 Oct 1956	Activated at Selfridge Field, Michigan
1 Oct 1970	Redesignated 1st Tactical Fighter Wing
1 Oct 1991	Redesignated 1st Fighter Wing



## Appendix 4: Stations

### Group

5 May 1918	Toul, France
28 Jun 1918	Touquin, France
9 Jul 1918	Saints, France
1 Sep 1918	Rembercourt, France
9-24 Dec 1918	Colombey-les-Belles, France
22 Aug 1919	Selfridge Field, Michigan
31 Aug 1919	Kelly Field, Texas
1 Jul 1921	Ellington Field, Texas
1 Jul 1922	Selfridge Field, Michigan
9 Dec 1941	San Diego Naval Air Station, California
1 Feb – May 1942	Los Angeles, California
10 Jun 1942	Goxhill, England
24 Aug 1942	Ibsley, England
13 Nov 1942	Tafaraoui, Algeria
20 Nov 1942	Nouvion, Algeria
14 Dec 1942	Biskra, Algeria
Feb 1943	Chateaudundu-Rhumel, Algeria
29 Jun 1943	Mateur, Tunisia
31 Oct 1943	Sardinia
8 Dec 1943	Gioia del Colle, Italy
8 Jan 1944	Salsola Airfield, Italy
8 Jan 1945	Vincenzo, Italy
21 Feb 1945	Salsola Airfield, Italy
Mar – 16 Oct 1945	Lesina, Italy
3 Jul 1946	March Field (later AFB), California
18 Jul 1950	George AFB, California
15 Aug 1950	Griffiss AFB, New York
4 Jun 1951	George AFB, California
1 Dec 1951 – 6 Feb 1952	Norton AFB, California
18 Aug 1955 – 1 Feb 1961	Selfridge AFB, Michigan

### Wing

15 Aug 1947	March Field (later AFB), California
18 Jul 1950	George AFB, California
1 Dec 1951 – 6 Feb 1952	Norton AFB, California
18 Oct 1956	Selfridge AFB, Michigan
31 Dec 1969	Hamilton AFB, California
1 Oct 1970	MacDill AFB, Florida
30 Jun 1975	Langley AFB, Virginia

## **Appendix 5: Campaign Participation Credits**

### **World War I Battle Honors Awarded to the 1st Pursuit Group**

Lorraine	(defensive sector)
Champagne	(defensive sector)
Champagne-Marne	15 – 18 Jul 1918
Aisne-Marne	18 Jul – 6 Aug 1918
Oise-Marne	18 Aug – 11 Nov 1918
St Mihiel	12 – 16 Sep 1918
Meuse-Argonne	26 Sep – 11 Nov 1918

### **World War II Battle Honors Awarded to the 1st Pursuit Group**

Air Combat	7 Dec 1941 – 11 May 1945
Air Offensive, Europe	4 Jul 1942 – 5 Jun 1944
Algeria-French Morocco	8 – 11 Nov 1942
Tunisia (Air)	12 Nov 1942 – 13 May 1943
Sicily	14 May – 17 Aug 1943
Naples-Foggia (Air)	18 Aug 1943 – 21 Jan 1944
Anzio	22 Jan – 24 May 1944
Rome-Arno	22 Jan 9 Sep 1944
Normandy	6 Jun – 24 Jul 1944
Northern France	25 Jul – 14 Sep 1944
Southern France	15 Aug – 14 Sep 1944
North Appenines	10 Sep 1944 – 4 Apr 1945
Rhineland	15 Sep 1944 – 21 Mar 1945
Central Europe	22 Mar – 11 May 1945
Po Valley	5 Apr – 8 May 1945

### **Gulf War Battle Honors Awarded to the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing**

Defense of Saudi Arabia	2 Aug 1990 – 16 Jan 1991
Liberation of Kuwait	17 Jan – 11 Apr 1991

### **Awards and Citations**

#### **Distinguished Unit Citations (DUC)**

Salerno, Italy	25 Aug 1943 (1st Fighter Group)
Aversa, Italy	30 Aug 1943 (1st Fighter Group)
Ploesti, Romania	18 May 1944 (1st Fighter Group)

#### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards (AFOUA)**

1 July 1975 – 31 October 1976	1 June 2004 – 31 May 2006
15 June 1982 – 15 June 1984	1 June 2008 – 31 May 2010
16 June 1984 – 16 June 1986	
1 June 1995 – 31 May 1987	
1 June 1998 – 31 May 2000	
1 June 2000 – 31 May 2001	

## **Appendix 6: Langley Air Force Base**

Langley's heritage reaches back to the beginning of the Republic. The land purchased for the experimental station encompassed six plantations: Moorefield, Bloomfield, Pools, Lamington, Sherwood, and a small part of Canebrake. Sherwood was a land grant from the King of England to the Purifie family in the early 17th Century. The first free school in America, the Syms School, was located on what is now Langley Air Force Base. George Wythe, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, lived on land that became part of Langley.

Before 1916, aviation research and development were in the hands of private industry. The Army Signal Corps Aviation Section served as the center of military aviation; yet it did not have an organized program or special facilities for research. In the spring of 1916, the Army, Navy, and the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) jointly decided to construct such a facility. The Army agreed to search for such a site.

The Army appointed a board of officers who searched for a location. The board, sometimes posing as hunters and fisherman, investigated 15 locations before deciding on a site just north of Hampton, Virginia. The location met all the requirements: flat land bordering on a large body of water; east of the Mississippi; and not more than 12 hours travel time, by train, from Washington DC. A citizen's committee of Elizabeth City Council (now Hampton) acquired options on the land and in November offered it to the Army for \$290,000. On 30 December 1916, the government purchased the land totaling about 1,650 acres.

Construction on the fledgling field began in the same month that the first contingent of soldiers arrived, April 1917. Without any available facilities, the soldiers billeted at "Fortress Monroe," until moving into a cottage on Sherwood. In mid-June, the soldiers organized into the field's first unit, the 5th Aviation School Corps. On 7 August 1917, the Aeronautical Experimental School, as it was initially called, became officially known as Langley Field.

Samuel Pierpont Langley, the base's namesake, served as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and was a pioneer of aeronautical scientist, among other hobbies



such as astronomy and physics. Largely a self educated person, Langley's experiments suggested that heavier-than-air aircraft could sustain flight. Publications of his conclusions by the Smithsonian encouraged other air pioneers – even the Wright Brothers. Langley successfully flew powered model airplanes as early as 1896, but failed in two attempts to fly a piloted aircraft.

Work on the base progressed slowly due to the nature of the ground. One contractor described the land in somewhat exaggerated terms as:

Nature's greatest ambition was to produce in this, her cesspool, the muddiest mud, the weediest weeds, the dustiest dust, and the most ferocious mosquitoes the world has ever known. Her plans were so well formulated and adhered to that she far surpassed her wildest hopes and desires....

In addition to the muddiest mud, World War I slowed progress on the field. Nevertheless, Langley Field played only a minor role in the war effort. During the war, personnel at Langley studied bomb trajectories and developed bomb sights, recognition lights for aircraft, a turn indicator, a sextant for use in airplanes, an improved compass, and other flying aids. Additionally, the Army established an aerial photography school at Langley. In July 1920, the Air Service, now a separate combat arm of the US Army, established the Air Service Field Officers' School at Langley. Six years later the Air Service changed its name to the Air Corps in a move toward becoming a separate service. Along with it, the school became the Air Corps Tactical School, and advocated that military aviation provide an independent means of gaining the national objective. In 1931 the school moved to Maxwell Field, Alabama, and eventually became the Air University. Among the instructors and students of the school, while at Langley, are several future generals and base namesakes. A partial list includes: Carl Spaatz, Robert Olds,

Claire L. Chennault, George C. Kenney, Lewis Brereton, Frank Andrews, Clarence L. Tinker, William McChord, Frank Tyndall, Frederick Eglin, and Horace Hickam.



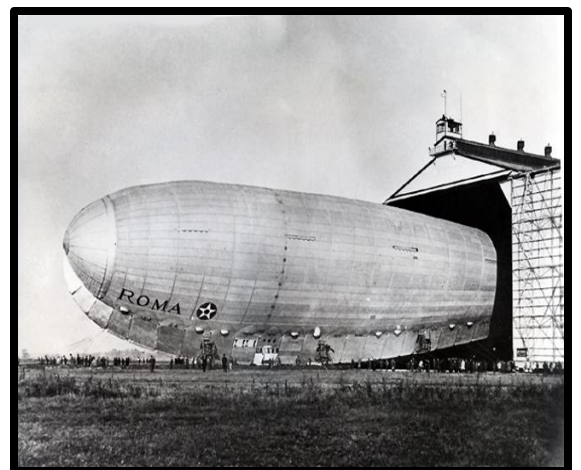
Brigadier General “Billy Mitchell” discusses the bomb run with General John Pershing while Pershing’s aide Major George Patton looks on.

In the early 1920s, Langley became the proving grounds for new airpower concepts. Brigadier General William “Billy” Mitchell claimed that airpower could destroy any surface ship with torpedoes and bombs. In 1921, the First Provisional Air Brigade formed for the purpose of putting to rest the heated controversy raised by General Mitchell’s claims. In July, a series of successful “attacks” were made against some

captured German ships including the huge battleship *Ostfriesland*. On July 21st, several aircraft flew from Langley carrying 2,000 pound bombs. In an attack that lasted less than 25 minutes, the huge battleship shattered under the weight of the explosions and slid slowly beneath the waves. Additional tests flew from Langley two years later against obsolete American ships – confirming Mitchell’s arguments.

In July 1922, the 2d Bombardment Group arrived at Langley and remained until October 1942. For several years, the 2d represented the Air Corps’ only bombardment group. Besides its military mission, the group flew airmail missions during the mail crisis of 1934. In 1937, the unit became the first to receive the new B-17 *Flying Fortress*. A young navigator by the name of Curtis LeMay served in the 2d at Langley.

As early as 1918, Langley hosted several balloon units. Airship activity at Langley was once so prominent that even today a significant portion of the base is known as the lighter-than-air (LTA) area. The most famous of the airships flown from Langley was the ill-fated *Roma*. On 21 February 1922, during its first test flight with new high powered engines, the



*Roma* crashed and burned, killing 34 crew members. By 1935, the airships were gone from Langley.

In 1935, General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force activated at Langley in another step toward an autonomous Air Force. Airpower advocates hoped to create a force that would provide strategic bombing and close tactical support of conventional ground forces. Their hopes fulfilled when the 2d Bombardment Group took part in maneuvers at Virginia Beach in 1935 and during a mercy mission to earthquake victims in Chile in 1939. The latter effort earned the MacKay Trophy for the Langley-based unit.

Langley Field expanded during the GHQ tenure to include the area known as Shellbank. GHQ remained at Langley until 15 March 1941 when it moved to Bolling Field, Washington D.C., so it could be closer to the central government complex.

The 1st Bomber Command joined Langley from 5 September 1941 to 21 January 1942. During America's entry into World War II, the 1st had the responsibility for antisubmarine operations in the Atlantic until handing it off to the Navy in 1943. For the rest of the war, Langley served as a training ground for construction battalions and for guard dogs. The 20th Fighter-Control Squadron also conducted fighter control operations from Langley.

At the end of WWII, rumors that Langley would close dominated conversations around the area. These rumors quickly dispelled when Langley received a permanent training mission. In early 1946, Langley became a base devoted principally to housing administrative headquarters.

On 27 May 1946, two month old Tactical Air Command (TAC) moved to Langley under the command of. From that time until its inactivation in 1992, TAC called Langley home. Langley also served as an operating base for units throughout the command.

In 1947, President Eisenhower created the Department of the Air Force – a new and separate service; and Langley Field became Langley Air Force Base (AFB). Activities at Langley included combat reconnaissance and training. Langley planes made a significant contribution to the Berlin Airlift in 1948.

When hostilities sparked in Korea, Langley's 4th Fighter Wing and its F-86 *Sabres* were among the first to deploy. In response to a need for conventional support

aircraft, Langley instituted a B-26 combat crew training school that trained pilots until after the signing of the armistice that effectively ended the Korean War in 1953.

In April 1953, the 405th Fighter-Bomber Wing equipped with F-84 *Thunderjets* arrived at Langley. The unit, whose mission it was to maintain global mobility, exercised with the Air Force's first aerial tankers. This global mission was put to the test in 1958 during the Lebanon and Taiwan crises. Both TAC and Langley passed the test.

A new era opened for Langley in November 1965 with the arrival of the 316th Tactical Airlift Wing, flying the C-130 *Hercules*. For the next ten years, the people and aircraft of the 316th participated in countless lifesaving humanitarian missions around the world. It also provided invaluable operational airlift for tactical forces and cargo nearly every day.

Langley returned to the fighter business in the mid-1970s with the arrival of the F-15 Eagle and the new host unit the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing (now the 1st Fighter Wing). By the end of 1976, the base became the host to the first operational F-15 wing.

Throughout the 1980s, the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing trained to fly, fight, and win. The unit participated in numerous exercises and deployments with the goal of providing airpower for America. Then, in 1990, the Langley-based 1st Tactical Fighter Wing received the call to defend Saudi Arabia from Iraqi aggression during Operation DESERT SHIELD. In 1991, 1st Tactical Fighter Wing F-15s participated in Operation DESERT STORM. Lessons learned from the Gulf War pointed to a need for the Air Force to realign its combat forces. On 1 June 1992, both Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command inactivated and Air Combat Command (ACC) activated to replace them. Since then, ACC has called Langley AFB home. Once again, Langley served as the focal point for America's Air Force.

Langley has a legitimate claim to being one of the oldest continuously active Air Force Bases in the U.S.. Its history is long, illustrious, and bound to growth of U.S. military aviation. The Army Signal Corps Aviation School, the Air Service, the Air Corps, and the Air Force all have their place in Langley's history. General Mitchell and the 1st Provisional Air Brigade served at Langley. The famous lighter-than-air ship *Roma* served at Langley. Countless air power pioneers, leaders, and visionaries served at Langley. Among them were General Carl Spaatz, the first Air Force Chief of Staff, and General Claire Chennault of the Flying Tigers fame.



The list of aircraft that served at Langley compares to the complete inventory of American military aircraft. Among them were the JN-4 (better known as the Jenny), DH-4, B-2, B-9, B-10, XB-15, B-17, B-18, P-36, P-40, B-24, B-25, B-26, F-84, F-86, F-106, C-130, F-15, F-22 and numerous experimental aircraft. Langley was also home to several varieties of lighter-than-air airships and balloons.

Langley AFB is firmly rooted in the past, serves a vital function in the present, and figures to be a prominent part of the future. As Langley leads the way into the future of the Air Force with the F-22 and with Air Combat Command, its men and women become part of its rich history every day. No discussion of Air Force history would be complete without mention of Langley AFB.

