

## 44 FIGHTER GROUP



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

44 Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 20 Nov 1940  
Activated, 15 Jan 1941  
Redesignated 44 Bombardment Group, Heavy, 20 Aug 1943  
Redesignated 44 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy, 5 Aug 1945  
Inactivated, 12 Jul 1946  
Activated, 1 Jul 1947  
Inactivated, 6 Sep 1948  
Redesignated 44 Bombardment Group, Medium, 20 Dec 1950  
Activated, 2 Jan 1951  
Inactivated, 16 Jun 1952  
Redesignated 44 Operations Group, 29 Aug 1991  
Activated, 1 Sep 1991  
Inactivated, 1 Jul 1994  
Redesignated 44 Fighter Group, 7 Jan 2010  
Activated, 1 Feb 2010

#### STATIONS

MacDill Field, FL, 15 Jan 1941  
Barksdale Field, LA, Feb 1942  
Will Rogers Field, OK, 26 Jul-28 Aug 1942  
Cheddington, England, 10 Sep 1942 (ground echelon)  
Shipdham, England, 10 Oct 1942 (ground echelon), 11 Oct 1942 (air echelon)  
Benina, Libya, 28 Jun 1943

Shipdham, England, 28 Aug 1943-15 Jun 1945  
Sioux Falls AAFld, SD, 26 Jun 1945  
Great Bend AAFld, KS, 24 Jul 1945  
Smoky Hill AAFld, KS, 14 Dec 1945-12 Jul 1946  
Andrews Field (later, Andrews AFB), MD, 1 Jul 1947-6 Sep 1948  
March AFB, CA, 2 Jan 1951  
Lake Charles AFB, LA, 1 Aug 1951-16 Jun 1952  
Ellsworth AFB, SD, 1 Sep 1991-1 Jul 1994  
Holloman AFB, NM, 1 Feb 2010

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

3 Bombardment Wing, 15 Jan 1941  
III Bomber Command, 5 Sep 1941  
Eighth Air Force, 10 Sep 1942  
2 Bombardment Wing, Sep 1942  
2 Bombardment Division, 13 Sep 1943  
14 Combat Bombardment Wing, Sep 1943  
Second Air Force, 26 Jun 1945  
17 Bombardment Operational Training Wing, Jul 1945  
Strategic Air Command, 21 Mar 1946  
Fifteenth Air Force, 31 Mar-12 Jul 1946  
Strategic Air Command, 1 Jul 1947-6 Sep 1948.  
44 Bombardment Wing, Medium, 2 Jan 1951-16 Jun 1952  
44 Missile Wing, 1 Sep 1991-1 Jul 1994  
301 Fighter Wing, 1 Feb 2010

### **ATTACHMENTS**

201 Provisional Combat Wing, 25 Mar-12 Sep 1943

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-24, 1941-1945  
B-29, 1945-1946  
None, 1947-1948  
None, 1951-1952  
LGM-30 Minuteman II, 1991-1994  
F-22, 2010

### **COMMANDERS**

Lt Col Melvin B. Asp, 15 Jan 1941  
Lt Col Hugo P. Rush, May 1941  
Col F. H. Robinson, 1 Apr 1942  
Col Leon W. Johnson, 15 Jan 1943  
Lt Col James T. Posey, 3 Sep 1943  
Col Frederick R. Dent, Dec 1943

Col John H. Gibson, 1 Apr 1944  
Col Eugene H. Snavelly, 15 Aug 1944  
Col Vernon C. Smith, 15 Apr 1945-unkn  
Lt Col Henry C. Coles, 6 Aug 1945  
Col William J. Cain Jr., 30 Aug 1945  
Lt Col James F. Starkey, 8 Jan 1946-unkn  
None (not manned), 1 Jul 1947-6 Sep 1948  
Unkn, Jan 1951  
Col Howell M. Estes Jr., Feb 1951  
Col Carlos J. Cochrane, 7 Mar 1951-16 Jun 1952  
Col Howard R. Busch II, 1 Sep 1991  
Col Thomas R. Boland, 5 Jun 1992-unkn  
Col Donald R. Lindberg, 1 Feb 2010  
Col Randall Cason, 5 Jul 2016  
Col Matthew M. Fritz, 12 Jan 2019  
Col Curtis L. Pitts, 28 Jul 2020

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

World War II  
Antisubmarine Campaign, American Theater

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II  
Air Combat, EAME Theater  
Air Offensive, Europe  
Sicily  
Naples-Foggia  
Normandy  
Northern France  
Rhineland  
Ardennes-Alsace  
Central Europe

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations  
Kiel, Germany, 14 May 1943  
Ploesti, Rumania, 1 Aug 1943

Meritorious Unit Award  
1 Jun 2010-31 May 2011

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards  
1 Sep 1991-29 May 1992  
6 Jul 1992-1 Jul 1994  
1 Jun 2011-31 May 2013

**EMBLEM**



The insignia signifies the tough luck which the 44<sup>th</sup> had during 1941 and 1942 when they were an

out which sent out cadres and trained other organizations for overseas service while they remained in the States. IN addition to this they also had quite of trouble while pulling sub patrol over the Gulf of Mexico. All along the line, many little old incidents added to the list which marked the 44<sup>th</sup> as a hard luck organization. The insignia is very distinctive and is used with variations, by all four squadrons and the group headquarters. The eight ball, with the stripped nose represents the different colors of the four squadrons; 66 BMS, red; 67 BMS, yellow; 68 BMS, white nose; and the 506 BMS, green nose. The headquarters, stripped nose. The insignia was then designed upon recommendation and suggestion of the group commander, Frank Robinson. Designed by 44 Bombardment Group intelligence officer, Maj Henry H. V. Hart



44 Fighter Group emblem: Azure, mullets four and four bendwise Or, the two in dexter base issuing contrails ascending to sinister, terminating as stylized flight symbols Sable, the one in chief tipped Gules; all within a diminished bordure of the second. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "44 FIGHTER GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence

required of Air Force personnel. The generic airframes reflect the Regular and Reserve Components of Total Force Integration (TFI). The "red tail" signifies the 301 FS, assigned under the 44 FG. The base of the airframes represents the stealthy traits of the fifth generation fighter (F-22). The AFRC side of TFI reflects on the citizen airmen of the 44 FG who are prepared to fly and fight in combat operations around the world. The two rows of four each stars represent one of the elements from the original patch of the 44 Bombardment Group. The two rows of four mullets also refer to the unit's numeric designation, "44." (Approved, 15 May 1951; modified, 12 Mar 2010)

## **MOTTO**

AGGRESSOR BEWARE

## **OPERATIONS**

Activated on 15 Jan 1941, the group trained with B-24s as a heavy bombardment group at MacDill Field, Fla. Moved to Barksdale Field, La, in Feb 1942, where it became an operational training unit, furnishing cadres for several new heavy bombardment groups. Also performed antisubmarine patrols over the Gulf of Mexico. In Jul 1942 began intensive preparations for combat.

Moved to England, Aug-Oct 1942, for service with Eighth Air Force. Flew its first combat mission on 7 Nov 1942. Operations consisted primarily of assaults against strategic targets in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Rumania, Austria, Poland, and Sicily. Pounded submarine installations, industrial establishments, airfields, harbors, shipyards, and other objectives in France and Germany, Nov 1942-Jun 1943. Received a DUC for an extremely hazardous mission against naval installations at Kiel, Germany, on 14 May 1943. Late in Jun 1943 most of the group moved to North Africa to support the invasion of Sicily by bombing airfields and marshalling yards in Italy. Participated in the famous low-level raid on the Ploesti oil fields on 1 Aug 1943, for which the group received its second DUC. Before returning to England at the end of Aug, the group bombed an aircraft factory in Austria and supported ground forces in Sicily. In Sep the group struck airfields in Holland and France and convoys in the North Sea. A detachment was sent in Sep-Oct to Tunisia to support the Salerno operations. From Nov 1943 to Apr 1945, the entire group carried out operations against targets in western Europe, concentrating on airfields, oil installations, and marshalling yards. Took part in the intensive campaign of heavy bombers against the German aircraft industry during Big Week, 20-25 Feb 1944. Sometimes flew support and interdiction missions. Struck airfields, railroads, and V-weapon sites in preparation for the Normandy invasion; supported the invasion in Jun 1944 by attacking strong points in the beachhead area and transportation targets behind the front lines.

Aided the Caen offensive and the St Lo breakthrough in Jul. Dropped food, ammunition, and other supplies to troops engaged in the airborne attack on Holland in Sep. Helped to check the enemy offensive during the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944-Jan 1945, by striking bridges, tunnels, choke points, rail and road junctions, and communications in the battle area. Attacked airfields and transportation in support of the advance into Germany, and flew a resupply mission during the airborne assault across the Rhine in Mar 1945. Flew last combat mission on 25 Apr 1945.

Returned to the US in Jun 1945. Trained as a very heavy bombardment group with B-29s, beginning in Aug 1945. Became part of the Strategic Air Command in Mar 1946. Inactivated on 12 Jul 1946.

First Mission: 7 Nov. 42. Last Mission: 25 Apr 45. Total Missions: 343 (18 from NA). Total Credit Sorties: 8,009. Total Bomb Tonnage: 18,980 tons.

Aircraft missing in action: 153

Other operational losses: 39

Enemy aircraft claims: 330-74-69.

#### Distinguished Unit Citation

Kiel, Germany, 14 May 1943

The 44 Bombardment Group (H), Headquarters 66th, 67th, 68th, and 506th Bombardment Squadrons (H), have distinguished themselves by outstanding performance of duty in the attack on the naval and shipbuilding installations at Kiel, Germany, on 14 May 1943, one of the greatest aerial battles of this war.

On this mission a single "group was, for the first time, fully loaded with incendiaries to be dropped after the lead groups had released their high explosive bombs. Because of the trail of the incendiaries the 44 Bombardment Group -(H), which had been assigned this task, was required to continue its bombing run for some two miles beyond the release point of the other groups in order to bomb effectively. To accomplish this it was necessary to fly alone, without supporting fire power of other groups, over one of the most heavily defended areas in Germany with a formation considerably smaller than the minimum for mutual self-protection. The mission was undertaken with full knowledge of the extreme hazards involved. Its successful performance demanded the highest degree of bravery and skill.

With only 19 B-24's, the 44 Bombardment Group (H) followed three B-17 groups to the target. Fierce and determined attacks by some 120 enemy fighters commenced at the German coast and continued until after leaving the coast on the return route. After the B-17s had reached their release point and turned away, the 44 Bombardment Group (H) proceeded alone in the face of continuous attacks by swarms of enemy fighters and increasingly concentrated flak. By opening its formation as required to clear the incendiaries of ships " ahead, it was rendered particularly vulnerable to enemy attack. Five of its airplanes "were" shot down on the" approach to and over the target. Despite these losses, the group held the necessary formation and continued on its run alone to its bomb release point. Bombing was extremely accurate and the target was blanketed with incendiaries.

Widespread fires destroyed or damaged many enemy installation. One additional airplane was lost after leaving the target. This small force was officially credited with 23 enemy aircraft destroyed, 13 probably destroyed, and one damaged. The successful fulfillment of this highly dangerous mission was due to the extraordinary courage, skill, and devotion to duty, of all concerned, which will always be worthy of emulation. Such heroism reflects the greatest credit on the 44 Bombardment Group (H) and its component squadrons and upon the United States Army Air Forces.

## Distinguished Unit Citation

Ploesti, Rumania, 1 Aug 1943

The 44 Bombardment Group (H) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 1 August 1943. Arriving in Africa without certain needed ground force personnel, this organization rapidly and efficiently completed preparation and training for a low level bombing attack, which constituted an innovation in aerial combat. After thorough familiarization with their objective and the landmarks of their 2,400 mile flight. the crews of this organization's aircraft departed on this dangerous mission in the calm and efficient performance of their duties. Though separated en route to the target from a portion of the formation, they proceeded undaunted to the initial point where it was discovered that their target had been previously attacked by another element. Though the element of surprise upon which the safety and success of this type of attack depended so strongly was now lost, they fearlessly approached their target through the maelstrom of anti-aircraft fire, exploding oil storage tanks and plants, despite the simultaneous attacks of enemy fighter aircraft.

At the risk of their lives and often at the sacrifice of their lives, these. gallant airmen left this enemy oil refinery, plant, and installations at Ploesti a blazing inferno and twisted mass of wreckage. This organization by its successful accomplishment of this mission in such a gallant and distinguished manner rendered a service to our nation and to our allies which will always be conspicuously outstanding in the annals of our air forces.

Inactivated on 12 Jul 1946. During 1 Jul 1947-6 Sep 1948 and 2 Jan 1951-16 Jun 1952 group was not operational.

Activated on paper at Andrews Field, Md on 1 Jul 1947, but remained under SAC in a non-operational status until inactivation on 6 Sep 1948.

Activated on 2 Jan 1951 at March AFB, Calif, but reduced to non-operational status on 10 Feb, with the combat squadrons attached directly to the wing. Inactivated on 16 Jun 1952.

Provided missile combat crew members to plan, program and manage the LGM-30 Minuteman II weapons system, 1991-1992; assisted in inactivation of assigned missiles, 1993-1994.

F-22 Reserve Unit Activated: Air Force Reserve Command's 44 Fighter Group was activated April 9 during a ceremony at Holloman AFB, N.M. The group, which includes the 301st Fighter Squadron and the 44 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, is Holloman's first Reserve unit and the sole AFRC unit so far sharing in the operations of the F-22 fighter. It will work with Holloman's active duty 49th Fighter Wing to fly and maintain F-22s. Holloman is in the midst of standing up two F-22 squadrons. However, the ultimate number of F-22s that call the desert base home will be influenced by USAF's beddown decisions on the F-35 strike fighter. The 44 FG traces its lineage to the 44 Bombardment Group (Heavy) that flew B-17s during World War II. The 301st FS formerly operated F-16s at Luke AFB, Ariz. 2010

44 Fighter Group members officially saluted its new commander during an assumption of command ceremony at hangar 868 here April 3. Lt. Col. Scott Crogg, who unofficially commanded

the group as vice commander since July, assumed command with Brig. Gen. Ronald Miller, 301st Fighter Wing commander, NAS JRB Fort Worth, Texas, presiding. Colonel Crogg's interest in flying began when his boss gave him three free flying lessons as a gift. The 16-year-old insurance salesman took to the California skies and never looked back. He graduated from the Air Force Academy and went on to serve at several assignments as a pilot. He flew 140 combat missions over Iraq, totaling 500 combat flight hours. While not flying fighters, he worked for Delta Airlines as a commercial pilot. Colonel Crogg was humbled by the people who attended the assumption of command ceremony. Many folks in attendance are not directly in his chain of command, but their support was felt, Colonel Crogg said. "Many people were involved in getting me to where I am today," he said. "I can attest to the success of mentorship, which works both ways. I have been mentored from above and below. To see many of my mentors supporting me today sends a powerful message." Colonel Crogg attributes his success to the people in his chain of command, previous co-workers and supervisors, to his family, and to his current unit. He thanked his father for being a "steady safety net" and thanked his mother for teaching him "all I need to know about mission and patriotism." He also thanked his sister and her family for their support. "I send my humble thanks to the 10th Air Force leaders who entrusted me with this role," he said. "I am confident we have the top cover to get the job done." Colonel Crogg's focus is to continue the unit's unwavering support and integration with the 49th Wing. He also is focused on developing Airmen who are ready to support Air Force Reserve Command needs and the active duty needs at Holloman. General Miller commended Colonel Crogg's dedication to the Air Force and his will do look for the next opportunity. General Miller noted the importance of developing Reservists who are balanced, agile and ready. Balancing civilian life, military life and family life is important for every Reservist. Being on the leading edge, taking advantage of education benefits and looking for the next training is how each Reservist can succeed and can fit anywhere in the Air Force. Being ready when the commander in chief calls is part of the job, he said. "Colonel Crogg is a balanced, agile, ready warrior," General Miller said. "He sets an example as a leader and continually sets the bar at a higher level. We look to him for leadership." Colonel Crogg closed the ceremony with pledging his commitment to the unit and thanking the unit's members for their constant efforts and dedication

Air Force Reserve Command moved closer to launching its second F-22A associate group Jan. 7 when Col. Donald "Louie" Lindberg flew his first Raptor sortie at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M. Colonel Lindberg commands Detachment 1, 301st Fighter Wing at Holloman. Plans call for the detachment to stand up as the 44 Fighter Group in late summer or early fall. The Air Force Reserve stood up its first classic associate F-22 unit, the 477th FG, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, in October 2007. "It was a great mission," said Colonel Lindberg, describing his F-22A flight. "The weather was beautiful. It was a great ride." Twenty-six other Reservists train with Airmen from the 49th Fighter Wing, the host regular Air Force unit at Holloman. Air Force Reserve officials expect the group to be fully operational and capable to deploy four pilots and 75-80 maintainers by November. The goal is to have 270 unit Reservists assigned in the next three years. The fully manned unit will have about 195 aircraft maintainers, 12 pilots and about 25 people in a medical flight, Colonel Lindberg said. "It will also include personnel support in areas such as communications, logistics, services and security," he said. "We have been hiring at a rate of seven to eight people per month and hope to have 90 by June." The 44 mission is to develop and retain

combat-ready Citizen Airmen. Many of the people joining the unit are highly experienced, prior-service Airmen. F-15 and F-16 maintainers with five and seven skill level certifications often fill maintenance positions. After being assigned to Holloman, they receive F-22 training from 49th FW people. A smaller percentage of Reservists will need to attend formal technical school training. "We are getting a lot of spouses who are separated prior-service (Airmen) and some active-duty Palace Chase applicants (people who complete their service obligation in the National Guard or Reserve)," said Master Sgt. Valerie James, an in-service recruiter at Holloman. "There has also been a lot of interest from prior-service members in Albuquerque, N.M., and El Paso, Texas. I'm confident we will fill the unit." The 44 FG is expected to be a full partner with the 49th FW in deployment taskings. "We may not necessarily fully mobilize for deployment, but we expect at minimum an 80 percent volunteer rate for deployment taskings," Colonel Lindberg said. "We are planning to set ourselves up to be the second or third package to go to war, with the 49th FW." 2009

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

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

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