

8 FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

8 Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 20 Nov 1940
Activated, 15 Jan 1941
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 20 Aug 1943
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, Two-Engine, 6 Nov 1944
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, 8 Jan 1946
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, 1 May 1948
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, Jet, 10 Aug 1948
Redesignated 8 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Feb 1950
Redesignated 8 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8 Jul 1958
Redesignated 8 Fighter Squadron, 1 Nov 1991

STATIONS

Selfridge Field, MI, 15 Jan 1941
Morrison Field, FL, 23 May 1941–4 Jan 1942
Melbourne, Australia, 2 Feb 1942
Canberra, Australia, 16 Feb 1942
Darwin, Australia, 17 Apr 1942
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 25 Sep 1942
Dobodura, New Guinea, 15 Apr 1943

Tsili Tsili, New Guinea, 30 Aug 1943
Gusap, New Guinea, c. 29 Oct 1943
Hollandia, New Guinea, 3 May 1944
Biak, 23 Jun 1944
Tacloban, Leyte, 25 Oct 1944
San Jose, Mindoro, 2 Jan 1945
Lingayen, Luzon, 27 Feb 1945
Okinawa, 17 Aug 1945
Atsugi, Japan, 15 Sep 1945
Chitose AB, Japan, 20 Feb 1946
Misawa AB, Japan, 2 Apr 1948
Ashiya AB, Japan, 30 Jun 1950
Itazuke AB, Japan, 8 Jul 1950
Taegu AB, South Korea, 29 Sep 1950
Kunsan AB, South Korea, 1 Apr 1953
Misawa AB, Japan, 4 Nov 1953–10 Dec 1957
Etain/Rouvres AB, France, 10 Dec 1957
Spangdahlem AB, Germany, 25 Aug 1959–15 Jul 1968
Holloman AFB, NM, 15 Jul 1968

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Ramstein AB, Germany, 12 Sep–11 Oct 1970 and 10 Sep–6 Oct 1971
Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, 12 May–4 Oct 1972
Hahn AB, Germany, 3 Mar–5 Apr 1973 and 5 Sep–6 Oct 1975
Ramstein AB, Germany, 21 Sep–20 Oct 1976 and 22 Aug–22 Sep 1977

ASSIGNMENTS

49 Pursuit (later 49 Fighter; 49 Fighter Bomber) Group, 15 Jan 1941
49 Fighter Bomber (later, 49 Tactical Fighter; 49th Fighter) Wing, 10 Dec 1957
49 Operations Group, 15 Nov 1991

ATTACHMENTS

49 Fighter Bomber Wing, 15 Apr–15 Oct 1957
26 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 12 Sep–11 Oct 1970 and 10 Sep–6 Oct 1971
50 Tactical Fighter Wing, 3 Mar–5 Apr 1973 and 5 Sep–6 Oct 1975
86 Tactical Fighter Wing, 21 Sep–20 Oct 1976 and 22 Aug–22 Sep 1977

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-35, 1941
P-40, 1942
P-47, 1943–1944
P-38, 1944–1946
P-51, 1946–1949
F-80, 1948–1951

F-84, 1951
F-100, 1957
F-105, 1962-1967
F-4, 1967-1978
F-15, 1978-1992
AT-38, 1992

COMMANDERS

Capt Robert D. Van Auken, Unkn-1 Apr 1942
Capt Allison W. Strauss, 1 Apr 1942
Maj Mitchell E. Sims, 27 Apr 1942-Nov 1942
Maj Robert V. Mchale, Unkn
Capt Charles E. Petersen, 22 May 1944
Maj William C. Drier, By 30 Aug 1944
Maj Mark H. Vinzant Jr., 22 May 1945
Capt James A. Chandler, 27 Oct 1945
Capt Bedford R. Underwood, 1 Jan 1948
Maj Verne E. Bivin, By 1 Feb 1948
Maj John A. Duganne, 30 Apr 1948
Capt John D. Mattie, 31 Oct 1948
Lt Col John A. Duganne, 1 Feb 1949
Lt Col Benjamin H. King, 11 Nov 1950
Maj Irving W. Boswell, Apr 1951
Lt Col James B. Fishburn, Jul 1951
Lt Col Erwin B. Elrod, 30 Nov 1951-Jul 1952
Lt Col William F. Georgi, Unkn-Jan 1953
Maj Frank D. Henderson Jr., Jan 1953
Maj Lucius G. Lacroix, 1 Apr 1953
Maj Robert E. Carey, 10 Jun 1953
Lt Col John L Gregory Jr., By Dec 1953
Lt Col Paul J. Imig, Mar 1955-Unkn
Lt Col Charles H. Duncan, Jun 1957
Maj James O. Cowee, 10 Dec 1957
Maj Stephen L. Bettinger, 15 Nov 1958
Maj John L. Peters, 9 Sep 1960
Lt Col Francis B. Clark, 17 Jul 1961
Lt Col Robert A. Evans, 13 Nov 1962
Lt Col James M. Morris, Sep 1964
Maj Walter S. Bruce, 31 Dec 1965
Lt Col Lloyd C. Smith, 24 Jun 1968
Lt Col Lester W. Krushat, By Dec 1968
Lt Col James B. Ross, 30 Jun 1969
Lt Col James R. Lawver, 4 Feb 1970
Lt Col Donald W. Hobart, 13 Nov 1970

Lt Col William L. Anderson, 27 Oct 1972
Lt Col Harry E. Vreeland, 3 May 1974
Lt Col James E. Lapine, 3 Mar 1976
Lt Col Donald W. Kilgus, 1 Dec 1977
Lt Col Patrick S. Dotson Jr., 18 Jan 1980
Lt Col Joseph M. Henderson Jr., 25 Sep 1981
Lt Col David E. Rickert, 18 Jul 1983
Lt Col Robert L. Summers, 1 Jul 1985
Lt Col Jerry D. Coy, 12 Nov 1986
Lt Col William G. Stinebaugh, 26 Aug 1988
Lt Col Gary B. Wood, 2 Oct 1989
Lt Col John D. W. Corley, 28 May 1991
Lt Col Edward T. Schantz, 14 Aug 1992
Lt Col James P. Hunt, 1 Jul 1993
Lt Col Michael P. Setnor, 10 Feb 1995
Lt Col Michael Roller, 14 Jun 1996
Lt Col Gary R. Woltering, 27 Jun 1997
Lt Col David A. Moore, 1 Jul 1999
Lt Col Matthew P. Mckeon, 13 Jul 2001
Lt Col David F. Toomey, 2 Jun 2003

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
East Indies
Air Offensive, Japan
China Defensive
Papua
New Guinea
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive

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

Second Korean Winter
Korea Summer-Fall, 1952
Third Korean Winter
Korea, Summer 1953

Vietnam
Vietnam Ceasefire

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Australia, [20 Apr]–25 Aug 1942
Papua, [30 Sep] 1942–23 Jan 1943
New Guinea, 14 May 1943
Philippine Islands, 27 Oct–7 Dec 1944
Korea, [2 Jul]–25 Nov 1950
Korea, 9 Jul–27 Nov 1951

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device
5 May–6 Oct 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Mar 1964–28 Feb 1966
1 Mar 1966–30 Jun 1967
1 Jan 1971–15 Apr 1972
1 Jun 1995–31 May 1997
1 Jun 1998–31 May 1999
2 May 2004–31 May 2005

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations

[2 Jul] 1950–7 Feb 1951
8 Feb 1951–31 Mar 1953

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

9 May–4 Oct 1972

EMBLEM



8 Fighter Squadron emblem



8 Fighter-Bomber Squadron patch



8 Tactical Fighter Squadron emblem



8 Fighter Squadron emblem: On an Air Force Golden Yellow disc within a narrow Black border, a Black sheep, his eye White, standing on a Red lightning flash fesswise, abased, the lightning pointing to dexter. (Approved, 12 May 1960; replaced emblem approved, 7 Jan 1952)

MOTTO

The Black Sheep

OPERATIONS

The 8 Fighter Squadron's story began on January 16, 1941, when the 49th Pursuit Group, Interceptor was activated at Selfridge Field, Michigan.

Each Squadron received one PT-17 Stearman, one PT-13 Ryan Basic Trainer, three P-35 Seversky Advanced Trainer fighter aircraft and one P-40C Curtiss Warhawk for training purposes.

Approximately one year after activation, the 8 and its sister squadrons moved to the Southwest Pacific to begin their World War II combat role. Flying the P-40, the 8 quickly asserted itself.

Group Headquarters and the 8 Fighter Bomber Squadron were transported to New Guinea aboard the US Army Transport Seawitch.

The 8 Squadron, having completed its conversion to P-38s, flew its first mission in those planes on 9 October, when it bombed the Kairotoe airstrip on Ceram Island.

On 16 February 1942 Captain Van Auken moved his 8 Pursuit Squadron by train to Fairbairn airfield just east of Canberra. Officers were billeted in the city and the enlisted men shared barracks with the RAAF at the airfield.

An 80 man team from the 49th Pursuit Group moved by rail to Amberley airfield west of Brisbane. This team was lead by Lieutenant George Hermanson of the 7th Pursuit Squadron, Dick Illing of the 8 Pursuit Squadron, Lieutenant Fred Hollier of the 9th Pursuit Squadron and Lieutenant Paul Werner from the HQ Squadron. The P-40 Kittyhawks (Warhawks) were fitted out at Amberley.

The 8 Pursuit Squadron welcomed new Flight Leaders Captain Allison W. Strauss and George Kiser. Lieutenants R.C. Dockstader and Jim Morehead joined the Squadron as new Element leaders.

It was during the Second World War that the 8 acquired the title "The Black Sheep" Squadron. In 1943, the 49th Fighter Group began the transition from the P-47 to the P-38. While the other two squadrons received new aircraft, the 8 received the aircraft being discarded by the other squadrons. The pilots, feeling that the 8 was on the tail end of the supply line, began calling the 8 the "Black Sheep" Squadron.



P-40s at Darwin, 1942

From 1946 until 1950, the 8 TFS transitioned through the P-51 and F-80 and served as a part of the occupational forces in Japan. With the start of the Korean War in June of 1950, the newly redesigned 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing began combat operations in Korea by covering the evacuation of civilian personnel from Kimpo and Suwon. Combat in Korea, 2 Jul 1950–27 Jul 1953.



F-80s, Korea, 1950



The most heralded Sentinel rescue mission occurred on the afternoon of December 11, 1950, when 1st Lt. Donald R. Michaelis, flying an L-5 north of Seoul, picked up a mayday from the wingman of a bailed-out F-80 pilot. Learning the location of the downed pilot, Michaelis stated, "I knew it was too late in the day for a rescue helicopter to come after him, so I went off on my own hook." Lieutenant Michaelis headed, with fighter escort, to a location several miles southeast of Pyongyang. Because the area had no landing strips, the JOC at Taegu did not direct Michaelis to continue but allowed him to proceed at his own discretion. Meanwhile, the escort fighters had pinpointed the downed pilot and relayed to Michaelis that a nearby road would make a suitable landing strip. Michaelis decided to proceed, but finding the road unsatisfactory, he selected a nearby frozen rice paddy. On his third attempt he executed the difficult landing on the paddy. The downed pilot, 1st Lt. Tracy B. Mathewson of the 8 FBS, made a dash for the L-5. Perhaps surprised at the daring rescue attempt, the enemy troops did not fire until Mathewson had nearly reached the rescue aircraft. Their gunfire quickly attracted the attention of the escort fighters, whose strafing enabled the L-5 to take off. For this rescue, Lieutenant Michaelis earned the Silver Star. At an awards ceremony the next month, Michaelis and three other 3d ARS members received their Silver Stars.



After Korea, the 8 moved with the wing to Europe. During their eleven year stay at Etain-Rouvres Air Base, France and Spangdahlem Air Base, West Germany, the 8 flew F-86s, F-100s, F-105s, and finally F-4Ds in 1967.

In July 1968, the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing was assigned to Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. From May through October 1972, the 8 was deployed to Takhli Royal Thai AFB,

Thailand for combat operations. While in Southeast Asia, the 8 flew air interdiction and close air support missions.





After returning to Holloman, the 8 continued various combat exercises with F-4's until 1977, when it began its transition to the F-15. In June of 1978, the transition to the F-15 was completed. The squadron trained in the F-15 for thirteen years until June 1992.

Tactical Air Command deployed 12 F-15s of the 8 TFS from the 49 TFW from Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, to Kwang Ju Air Base, Korea, from 3 May to 3 June. During its stay, the unit deployed six aircraft to Misawa Air Base, Japan, for Cope North 82-3.

In August 1992, the 8 Fighter Squadron began flying the AT-38B. Its mission was to train new Air Force pilots, fresh out of undergraduate pilot training, the skills required for aerial combat.



On 30 July 1993, the 8 Fighter Squadron transitioned to the F-117A. Portions of the squadron deployed to Southwest Asia to fly combat air patrol, 19 Sep–19 Dec 1991.

The 8 Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, N.M., has taken delivery of the first of its 20 planned F-22 fighters. This aircraft arrived Dec. 21. Holloman's 49th FW is scheduled to receive 40 F-22s. Its 7th FS, sister unit to the 8 FS, is nearing its full complement of 20. The 8 FS, known as the "Black Sheep," should have its 20 F-22s. The unit had been without aircraft since April 2008, when it retired its F-117s. Holloman is also under consideration to host F-35 strike fighters. Air Force officials have said if F-35s end up there, they might relocate the F-22s. 2009

Airmen at Holloman AFB, N.M., held an inactivation ceremony for the 8 Fighter Squadron. The "Black Sheep" are standing down after less than two years of operating F-22s due to the Air Force's Raptor fleet consolidation plan, which calls for Holloman to lose its two squadrons' worth of F-22s and take on two F-16 squadrons for training. "We flew 2,500 sorties and over 3,000 hours. That's more than 10 sorties a day, with less than nine F-22s," said Lt. Col. Craig Baker, 8 FS commander, in highlighting his unit's accomplishments during the inactivation ceremony. The inactivation takes effect on July 15. Some of the 8 FS' F-22s are going, for the time being, to Holloman's 7th FS, while others will bolster the ranks of F-22 units at JB Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska; JB Langley-Eustis, Va.; and Nellis AFB, Nev. The 7th FS' F-22s will eventually shift to Tyndall AFB, Fla. This is the second time in the 8 FS' 61-year-history that the unit will go on inactive status. The first time was in April 2008 following the retirement of the F-117 Nighthawk. The Black Sheep have flown 15 airframes throughout their history, and they

dropped the first bombs in both Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom when they flew F-117s. 2011





The 8 Fighter Squadron was reactivated at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, Aug. 4, 2017, six years after its last inactivation May 13, 2011, as part of the 56th Fighter Wing, Luke AFB, Arizona. Lt. Col. Mark Sletten, the 8 FS commander, took command of the 8 FS at an activation

ceremony led by Col. James Keen, the 54th Fighter Group commander, who remarked on the squadron's future under Sletten's management.

"I have no doubt that the proud heritage of the Black Sheep will continue here at Holloman (AFB) under the leadership of (Sletten)," Keen said. "(Sletten) is a man with incredible core values, who is people-oriented, professional and a credible tactician. These traits are paramount to the mission of the 56th Fighter Wing, which is to build a future of air power by leading the Air Force in developing Airmen and training fighter pilots."

The squadron, first activated at Selfridge Field, Michigan, Jan. 16, 1941, as part of the 49th Pursuit Group, has maintained and piloted various styles of aircraft under an ever-evolving mission. Such aircraft including the P-40 Warhawk, the P-38 Lightning, the F-117 Nighthawk and most recently, the F-22 Raptor, were utilized throughout World War II, the Korean conflict and in parts of Southeast and Southwest Asia.

"In July 1968, the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing was assigned to Holloman (AFB) after several European assignments," said Arlan Ponder, the 49th Wing director of media operations and former base historian assistant. "From May through October 1972, the 8 (FS) was deployed to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand for combat operations. While in Southeast Asia, the 8 (FS) flew air interdiction and close air support missions. They received an Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation with a combat Valor device for their participation in Vietnam." In continuation of its colorful history, the 8 FS will now maintain and pilot F-16 fighter aircraft, along with its sister squadrons, the 311th FS and 314th FS.

According to Sletten, more than 40 F-16s are projected to be transported to Holloman AFB, almost double the number of aircraft currently assigned. An influx of personnel will accompany these aircraft, including approximately 600 contracted maintainers and roughly 60 Airmen. This historic event comes at a unique time as the Air Force is currently experiencing a fighter pilot shortage.

According to Lt. Gen. Gina M. Grosso, the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel Services, who testified on the pilot shortage before the House Armed Services subcommittee on Military Personnel in Washington, D.C., March 29, 2017, this crisis is the result of several factors, including high operational tempo over the past two decades and a demand for Air Force pilots from commercial industries. To alleviate this issue, Sletten said the 8 FS is dedicated to generating new F-16 fighter pilots and requalifying former F-16 fighter pilots as part of a production effort. "Our mission is to build the future of air power and to lead the Air Force in developing Airmen while training F-16 fighter pilots," Sletten said. "My goal is to produce Airmen and fighter pilots who are first and foremost, professionals, and who are lethal and passionate when it comes to their craft."

In alignment with this mission, Sletten aims to honor and build upon the 8 FS's legacy while reinvigorating the enthusiasm and passion of his Airmen. "I am very excited to be leading the Black Sheep of the 8 FS," Sletten said. "It is a privilege very few people have and a great responsibility--one I do not take lightly. I cannot wait to start contributing in tangible ways to the overall mission of the Air Force while instilling pride and excitement in the young men and women who are working for me." 2017

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 15 Oct 2010

Updated: 23 Jan 2024

Sources

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Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit history. *49th Tactical Fighter Wing, History in Review. 1940-1972.*