

54 TACTICAL FIGHTER WING

MISSION

LINEAGE

54 Troop Carrier Wing Established, 26 Feb 1943
Activated, 13 Mar 1943
Inactivated, 31 May 1946
Redesignated 54 Fighter Wing and allotted to the Air National Guard, 1 Jun 1946
Organized in the Georgia Air National Guard, 8 Jul 1946
Extended federal recognition, 2 Oct 1946
Ordered to active service, 10 Oct 1950
Inactivated and returned to the control of the Department of the Air Force, 11 Oct 1950
Redesignated 54 Tactical Fighter Wing, 5 Jun 1970
Activated, 15 Jun 1970
Inactivated, 31 Oct 1970

STATIONS

Brisbane, Australia, 13 Mar 1943
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 3 May 1943
Nadzab, New Guinea, 18 Apr 1944
Biak, 5 Oct 1944
Dulag, Leyte, 14 Feb 1945
Clark Field, Luzon, 11 Jun 1945
Tachikawa, Japan, 25 Sep 1945
Manila, Luzon, c. 26 Jan-31 May 1946
Marietta AAB (later, Dobbins AFB), Ga, 8 Jul 1946-11 Oct 1950
Kunsan AB, South Korea, 15 Jun-31 Oct 1970

ASSIGNMENTS

Fifth Air Force, 13 Mar 1943
Far East (later, Pacific) Air Service Command, 15 Jan-31 May 1946
Georgia Air National Guard, 8 Jul 1946

Fourteenth Air Force, 10-11 Oct 1950

Fifth Air Force, 15 Jun-31 Oct 1970

ATTACHMENTS

Detachment 1, Headquarters Fifth Air Force [5th ADVON], 15 Jul-30 Sep 1970

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47, 1943-1946

B-17, 1943_1944

C-46, 1944-1946

C-54, 1946

Unkn, 1946-1950

F-4, 1970

COMMANDERS

Maj Gen George G. Finch,

Col James L. Riley, 1948-1950

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

New Guinea

Leyte

Luzon

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Not operational from activation until 20 May 1943. Commenced air transport and medical air evacuation operations in support of Fifth Air Force on 26 May 1943, advancing as battle lines permitted. Employed C-47s almost exclusively, but during late 1943 and much of 1944 also used converted B-17s for armed transport missions in enemy-held territory. Supported every major advance made by the allies in the Southwest Pacific, operating from primitive airstrips carved from jungles and air-dropping cargo where airstrips unavailable.

Took part in the airborne invasion of Nadzab, New Guinea, in Sep 1943 by dropping paratroopers of the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment as well as Australian engineers and

heavy equipment. In Jul 1944, dropped 1,418 paratroopers on Noemfoor Island to aid the allied invasion forces. Then assumed the task of handling all freight and personnel moving in troop carrier aircraft in the Southwest Pacific, in addition to scheduled and unscheduled air movement of cargo and troops, and air evacuation of wounded personnel.

Some C-46s began operating within the wing in late and during 1945 large numbers of C-46s were used in addition to C-47s. By late 1944 and during the early months of 1945, most wing missions were flown to the Philippines. In Feb the wing flew three more airborne operations, all in the Philippines, to help encircle Japanese concentrations. Wing C-47s dropped napalm on Carabao Island, in Manila Bay, in Mar 1945.

When hostilities ended, the wing moved the entire 11th Airborne Division (11,300 personnel) from the Philippines to Okinawa on short notice, and then began transporting occupation forces into Japan. During Sep 1945, the wing also evacuated over 17,000 former prisoners of war from Japan to the Philippines. The wing served as part of the occupation forces in Japan from 25 Sep 1945 to about 26 Jan 1946, while continuing routine air transport operations and a scheduled courier service.

Beginning in Dec 1945 and continuing into mid-1946, most of the wing's components were reassigned to other units or inactivated, and on 15 Jan 1946 the wing became a component of the Far East (soon, Pacific) Air Service Command. Moving to the Philippines, the wing gained new components and flew scheduled routes between Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and the Hawaiian Islands. Replaced by the 403d Troop Carrier Group on 31 May 1946.

After the end of World War II, plans were implemented to organize the air units of the National Guard into a much larger force. 541 National Guard Air units would be allotted to the various states. Most were support units such as weather detachments, anti-aircraft batteries, bands, aircraft warning, and control organizations, etc. The combat elements were to be organized into twelve wings further divided into twenty fighter groups and two bombardment groups. Each fighter squadron would be equipped with 25 mission aircraft; P-51D's or P-47D/P-47N's. Additionally, each squadron would have four A-26's for target towing, two AT-6's for instrument training, and one C-47.

The first post-war Georgia National Guard Air unit, the 128th Fighter Squadron (SE), was activated at Marietta Army Air Base on 20 August 1946. Headquarters, 116th Fighter Group was activated 9 September 1946. Headquarters Squadron 54th Fighter Wing was activated on 6 October 1946. By 10 December 1946, 18 squadrons were organized in Georgia, most assigned to the 54th Fighter Wing and commanded by General George G. Finch. Although Wing Headquarters was located at the Marietta Army Air Base, 56 elements of the organization were spread throughout seven southeastern states Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Florida.

The 54th Fighter Wing was the first and the largest post WWII Air Guard Wing formed in the United States. The Wing was entirely self-sustaining in the field having all necessary attached

units including medical, engineer, signal, and communication units.

The 54th Wing had as its tactical units three fighter groups: the 116th with headquarters at Marietta, Georgia; the 117th, centered in Birmingham, Alabama; and the 118th, with headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. The 116th Fighter Group consisted of the 128th Fighter Squadron (P-47) at Marietta, the 158th Fighter Squadron (P-47) at Savannah, and the 157th Fighter Squadron (P-51) at Columbia, South Carolina, the 159th Fighter Squadron (P-51) at Jacksonville, Florida, and the 198th Fighter Squadron (P-47) at San Juan, Puerto Rico. The 117th Fighter Group included the 160th Fighter Squadron (P-51) and the 106th Bombardment Squadron (A-46) at Birmingham and the 153rd Fighter Squadron (P-47) at Meridian, Mississippi. The 118th Fighter Group consisted of the 105th Fighter Squadron (P-47) at Nashville, Tennessee and the 155th Fighter Squadron (P-47) at Charlotte, North Carolina.

Each of the three fighter groups had a corresponding Air Service Group and each of the squadrons had its own weather station and utility flight.

From 1946 until 1950 Air National Guardsmen in Georgia pursued an energetic course of training. An important phase of this training was the required 15-day summer training period.

The first full-scale exercise of the wing took place at Chatham Field, Savannah, Georgia in the summer of 1948. The next year, the Georgians of the 54th trained at Eglin Field, Florida. In 1950, Georgia components of the Wing diversified their training by holding their exercises in scattered locations. Wing Headquarters, along with the 154th AC&W Group and other separate elements of the Georgia Air National Guard, went to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The 116th Group, with the exception of the 128th Fighter Squadron, trained at Hunter field, Savannah. The 128th stayed at its home base, Dobbin AFB, where pilots concentrated on flying their new F-84's.

The exercises of 1950 were held with enthusiasm. The Korea conflict had begun, and the Air Guard's mission was clear. General Finch returned from his new assignment at the National Guard Bureau to visit the 54th units at field training. He promised them that when the call up came they would be the first to go. On 10 October 1950, the 54th Fighter Wing was included in the initial list and inducted into the active Air Force.

Colonel J. L. Riley, later promoted to Brigadier General, replaced Major General George G. Finch as Commanding General of the 54th Fighter Wing when General Finch became Chief of the Air Force Division of the National Guard Bureau.

In June 1970, as the 54th Tactical Fighter Wing, replaced the 354th TFW at Kunsan AB, South Korea. Used attached F-4 squadrons in the Republic of Korea.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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