

82nd FIGHTER GROUP (AIR DEFENSE)

MISSION

LINEAGE

82nd Pursuit Group (Interceptor) constituted, 13 Jan 1942
Activated, 9 Feb 1942
Redesignated 82nd Fighter Group, May 1942
Inactivated, 9 Sep 1945
Activated, 12 Apr 1947
Inactivated, 2 Oct 1949
Redesignated 82nd Fighter Group (Air Defense)
Activated, 18 Aug 1955

STATIONS

Harding Field, LA, 9 Feb 1942
Muroc, CA, 30 Apr 1942
Los Angeles, CA, May 1942
Glendale, CA, c. 16 Aug-16 Sep 1942
Northern Ireland, Oct 1942
Telergma, Algeria, Jan 1943
Berteaux, Algeria, 28 Mar 1943
Souk-el-Arba, Algeria, 13 Jun 1943
Grombalia, Tunisia, 3 Aug 1943
San Pancrazio, Italy, c. 3 Oct 1943
Lecce, Italy, 10 Oct 1943
Vincenzo Airfield, Italy, n Jan 1944
Lesina, Italy, c. 30 Aug-9 Sep 1945
Grenier Field, NH, 12 Apr 1947-2 Oct 1949
New Castle County Apt, DE, 18 Aug 1955

ASSIGNMENTS

Twelfth Air Force

Fifteenth Air Force
Strategic Air Command
Continental Air Command
Air Defense Command

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-38
P-51
F-94

COMMANDERS

1LT Charles T. Duke, Feb 1942
Col Robert Israel Jr., May 1942
LTC William E. Covington Jr., 17 Jun 1942
Col John W. Weltman, 4 May 1943
LTC Ernest C. Young, 2 Aug 1943
LTC George M. MacNicol, 26 Aug 1943
Col William P. Litton, Jan 1944
LTC Ben A. Mason Jr., 4 Aug 1944
Col Clarence T. Edwinson, 28 Aug 1944
Col Richard A. Legg, 22 Nov 1944
Col Joseph S. Holtner, 4 Jun 1945
LTC Robert M. Wray, 16 Jul 1945-unkn
Maj Leland R. Raphun, Apr 1947
LTC Gerald W. Johnson, 2 Jun 1947
Col Henry Viccellio, 14 Jun 1947
Col William M. Banks, 5 Nov 1948-Oct 1949
Col Clay D Albright Jr., 1955

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Air Combat, EAME Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Tunisia; Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Rome-Arno
Normandy
Northern France
Southern France
North Apennines
Rhineland
Central Europe

Po Valley

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Italy, 25 Aug 1943

Italy, 2 Sep 1943

Ploesti, Rumania, 10 Jun 1944

EMBLEM

Per bend or and azure a lightning bolt in bend throughout point to base, with two beviles, per bend argent, gules and or, between three fleurs-de-lis, two and one, of the second, and eleven stars in bend, six and five, of the first; over all in dexter chief a roundle per fess, wavy of two, sable and vert. (Approved, 4 Nov 1957)

MOTTO

ADORIMINI—"Up and at 'em!"

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The history of the 82d Fighter Group goes back to 13 January 1942, when the War Department constituted the 82d Pursuit Group (Interceptor). It was activated at Harding Field, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on 9 February 1942. From February 1942 to 9 September 1945, the primary components of the group were the 95th, 96th and 97th Pursuit (later Fighter) Squadrons. At the end of April 1942 when it had sufficient personnel and equipment, the 82d moved to Muroc, California, and started formation flying and gunnery and bombing training with P-38 Lightning aircraft. In May the War Department redesignated the 82d as a fighter group. The group left California in September and arrived in Ireland in October where it received additional training. At about the same time, the Allies launched their invasion of North Africa. By December 1942, Axis forces had repelled the Allied advance, and the long winter campaign had begun. It was at this time that the 82d Fighter Group moved to North Africa to serve with Twelfth Air Force.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, the 82d operated from Tafaraoui, Algeria, to protect two convoys in an antisubmarine patrol. On 1 January 1943, the air echelon moved to Telergma, Algeria, where it was joined by the ground echelon in February 1943. The 82d soon distinguished itself in dogfights with enemy fighters while escorting bombers over Gabes, Sfax, Tunis, Bizerte, Kairouan, Sardinia, and other points. On 20 March 1943, while escorting B-25s in a sea search off Cape Bon, a group of P-38s engaged the enemy in an air battle. Even though they were outnumbered by 50 enemy fighters, the 82d emerged with 11 confirmed kills, 2 probables, and 2 damaged, while not losing a single bomber. In April 1943, the group moved to Tunis to take part in the final phase of the campaign. On 11 April, it destroyed 32 JU-52s during a fighter sweep against enemy transport planes that were coming from Italy to supply the crumbling Afrika Corps. The

group scored hits on 14 April during a bombing mission on a large transport off Cape Zebid and on 8 May executed a bombing attack on the airdrome at Pantelleria.

The Tunisian campaign ended in May 1943. Between December 1942 and May 1943, the 82d Fighter Group flew 152 combat missions and 2,439 combat sorties. While escorting B-25, B-26, and B-17 bombers on 1,880 sorties, the group encountered 751 enemy aircraft, destroyed 199 of them, and lost 64 P-38s. From July to August 1943, the 82d engaged in the liberation of Sicily while supporting bomber raids against Naples on 17 July and participating in the first raid on Rome on 19 July. It flew 191 combat missions, including 3,335 combat sorties; escorted 2,987 B-25s and 382 B-26s; and engaged in 57 skip and dive bombing attacks. The 82d destroyed 78 enemy planes, had 17 probables, and damaged 56, while losing only 11 P-38s.

During the invasion of Italy by the Fifth Army, between 6 and 18 September 1943, the group patrolled the beachhead at Salerno where the pilots flew a round-the-clock schedule, dive-bombing enemy transports, communications, and gun positions. They also flew low altitude reconnaissance missions through the Foggia area reporting crucial enemy activities. The movement of the 82d to Italy and its assignment to Fifteenth Air Force was part of the airpower buildup to provide fighter protection for the bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force, when they strafed and bombed Axis oil targets.

From January 1944 until May 1945, the P-38s of the 82d Fighter Group struck oil centers at Ploesti in Rumania, Blechhammer in Poland, Vienna in Austria, Dubova in Czechoslovakia, as well as in Hungary, France, and Yugoslavia. On 10 June 1944, the 82d participated in one of the most daring strikes of the war, bombing the Romano-Americano oil refineries at Ploesti, the most heavily defended target on the continent.

On 12 April 1947, the War Department activated the 82d Fighter Group at Grenier Field in New Hampshire, and assigned it to Strategic Air Command. The group was outfitted with F-51 aircraft, and it trained in long range fighter and fighter escort operations. A few months later, in August 1947, the Air Force decided to test a new type of organization called wing-base. Under this plan, a number of combat wings were established, including the 82d Fighter Wing on 28 July 1947; however, the Air Force did not organize (assign personnel) to the wing until 15 August. On the same day, the 82d Fighter Group became a subordinate component of the wing. The test continued until 1 August 1948, by which time the Air Force had decided to adopt this type of organization as its standard. As a result, on 1 August, the 82d Fighter Wing was discontinued, and the Air Force activated a permanent 82d Fighter Wing, still with the 82d Fighter Group assigned as a subordinate organization. The wing continued to operate at Grenier until its inactivation on 2 October 1949.

Training commenced with activation of the organization. It began slowly, gathered speed, and the Group performed its first organizational operation, on TDY, in November, 1947, at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. This was a gunnery mission, and it succeeded.

Wednesday, January 7, 1948 put all hands at Grenier Field to the test, "Gen. George C. Kenney, SAC Commander, requested 82nd FG mount a maximum effort mission and rendezvous with his B-29

over Andrews AFB, MD. Heavy snowfall in Manchester prevented execution of this mission, but by working all night, snow removal teams had the airport ready for fighter operation that morning. At 0906 hours Kenney's aircraft touched down. Received by Grenier AFB Commander Col. Edwin L. Tucker and 82nd FG Commander Col. Henry Viccellio, the general and party proceeded to the air traffic control tower to watch the mass takeoff. The first F-51H took off at 1035, and 59 of 61 scheduled Mustangs took to the air. There were four air aborts, with 55 fighters continuing with the mission. The last Mustang landed at Grenier at 1510 hours."

In February, 1948, the Group returned to MacDill, on TDY for one month, for more gunnery.

In April, 1948, while the organization was still new, the EIGHTY-SECOND made itself ready and departed for Ladd Air Force Base, Alaska, on seventy-two hours notice. The Group remained in Alaska for three months, remaining on 24-hour Alert, seven days-a-week. And in one single month the Group flew more than three thousand hours. This was a major effort for the organization, and a measure of this effort makes it clearly evident that the elements of administration, mess, medical, transportation, maintenance, supply, communications, armament, and ordnance, all provided full cooperation and support.

The EIGHTY-SECOND returned to its home base at Grenier in July. There were some words uttered about a "breathing spell," but the organization soon went to Eglin Air Force Base to participate in OPERATIONS COMBINE III to demonstrate bombing, strafing, and escort, to students of the Air University. It was at this time that Lieutenant Colonel William M. Banks became Group Commander.

In February, 1949, the EIGHTY-SECOND performed for the movie cameras. Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, Fox, and Hearst newsreels made the movie, "Operation Snowball," using the EIGHTY-SECOND as its star. The film showed the operational efficiency of the Group during cold weather operations.

After this, assignments and missions continued close, one after the other. One squadron was sent to combined operations with the Ground Forces at Fort Bragg, NC operating from Pope Field. This squadron participated in ground support missions and fighter sweeps with the Aggressor Forces.

In May and June, 1949, the Group participated in OPERATION BLACK-JACK, in combination with the CONTINENTAL AIR COMMAND, to test radar efficiency in the interception of aircraft. This gave valuable experience to all the personnel who participated in the maneuver.

In June and July, 1949, the EIGHTY-SECOND participated in Combined Ground Forces Operations, at Fort Knox, Ky., and gave a demonstration, in addition, of fighter-type aircraft firepower for the benefit of military students.

Between 18 August 1955 and 8 January 1958, the Air Force again activated the 82d Fighter Group; however, the wing remained inactive. This time the group reported to Air Defense Command. Its primary mission was to provide air defense for the northeastern United States. This period is also part of the history of the 82d Fighter Group that has since been bestowed upon the wing.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

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Unit yearbook. *26th Air Division, Defense. 1956*.