

THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Due to the rigid pattern of racial segregation that prevailed in the United States during World War II, 966 Black military aviators were trained at an isolated training complex near the town of Tuskegee, Alabama, and at Tuskegee Institute. Four hundred and fifty Black fighter pilots under the command of Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (who was later to become the U.S. Air Force first Black Lt. General), fought in the aerial war over North Africa, Sicily and Europe flying, in succession, P-40, P-39, P-47, and P51 type aircraft. These gallant men flew 15,553 sorties and completed 1578 missions with the 12th Tactical U.S. Army Air Force and the 15th Strategic U.S. Army Air Force.

They were called the "Schwartzze Vogelmenschen" (Black Birdmen) by the Germans who both feared and respected them. White American bomber crews reverently referred to them as the "Redtail Angels" because of the identifying red paint on the tail assemblies of their aircraft and their reputation for not losing bombers to enemy fighters as they provided fighter escort to bombing missions over strategic targets in Europe.

The 99th Fighter Squadron which had already distinguished itself over North Africa, Sicily and Anzio was joined by three more Black squadrons: The 100th, the 301st. and the 302nd, to be designated as the 332nd Fighter Group. From Italian bases they also destroyed enemy rail traffic, coast watching surveillance stations and hundreds of vehicles on air to ground strafing missions. Sixty-six of these pilots were killed in aerial combat while another thirty-two were shot down and captured as prisoners of war.

These Black airmen came home with 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, Legions of Merit, Silver Stars, Purple Hearts, The Croix de Guerre and the Red Star of Yugoslavia.

Other Black Pilots, navigators, bombardiers and crewmen who were trained for medium bombardment duty were combined with the 332nd combat returnees into the 477th Composite Group (B-25's and P47's). This group never entered combat because of the surrender of Germany and Japan in 1945. Significantly, the 477th's demands for parity and recognition as competent military professionals combined with the magnificent wartime record of the 99th and the 332nd caused the U.S. War Department to review its racial policies.

For every Black pilot there were ten other civilian or military Black men and women on ground support duty. Many of these men and women remained in the military service during the post-World War II era and spearheaded the integration of the armed forces of the United States with their integration into the U.S. Air Force in 1949. Their success and achievement is evidenced by the elevation of three of these pioneers to flag rank: The late General Daniel "Chappie" James, our nation's first Black four star General, Lt. General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., USAF (Retired), and Major Gen. Lucius Theus, USAF (Retired).

Major achievements are attributable to many of those who returned to civilian life and earned positions of leadership and respect as businessmen corporate executives, religious leaders, lawyers, doctors, bankers, educators and politicians.

Nearly thirty years of anonymity were ended in 1972 with the founding of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. at Detroit, Michigan. Organized as a non-political, non-military, and non-profit national entity, the organization exists primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our nation's democratic process.

99th Flying Training Squadron

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **99th Flying Training Squadron (99 FTS)** is part of the 12th Flying Training Wing based at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. It operates T-1 Jayhawk aircraft conducting flight training. The squadron was formed during World War II as the first flying unit for African Americans. Known as the Tuskegee Airmen the unit served with distinction in the European Theater of Operations. Following the war it served as a flight training unit for four years in the 1940s until its inactivation. It was re-activated in 1988 to once again fill a flight training role.

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History



World War II

The 99th was originally formed as the Army Air Force's first African American fighter squadron, then known the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The personnel received their initial flight training at Tuskegee, Alabama earning them the nickname Tuskegee

99th Flying Training Squadron ^[1]



99th Flying Training Squadron Patch

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Active | 22 March 1941 – 1 July 1949 1 July 1988 – 1 April 1993 14 May 1993 – Present |
| Country | United States |
| Branch | United States Air Force |
| Type | Pilot Training |
| Part of | Air Education and Training Command 19th Air Force 12th Flying Training Wing 12th Operations Group |
| Garrison/HQ | Randolph Air Force Base |
| Engagements | World War II North African Campaign Operation Husky Operation Avalanche Italian Campaign |
| Decorations |  DUC  AFOUA |
| Commanders | |
| Notable commanders | Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. |

Airmen. The squadron was originally tentatively scheduled to fly air defense over Liberia but was diverted to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

Considered ready for combat duty, the 99th was transported to Casablanca, Morocco, on the *USS Mariposa* and participated in the North African campaign. From Morocco they traveled by train to Oujda then to Tunis, the location from which they operated against the *Luftwaffe*. Flyers and ground crew alike were isolated in their initial command, the 33d Fighter Group by the racial segregation practices of the Army and group commander Colonel William W. Momyer. The flight crews were handicapped by being left with little guidance from battle-experienced pilots except for a week spent with Colonel Philip Cochran. The 99th's first combat mission was to attack the small, but strategic, volcanic island of Pantelleria in the Mediterranean Sea, in preparation for the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. On Friday July 2 1943, Lieutenant Charles B. Hall of Brazil, Indiana, shot down the first enemy plane for the group. "It is probably the first time in history that a Negro in a pursuit plane has shot down an enemy in aerial combat."^[2] The 99th moved to Sicily where it received a Distinguished Unit Citation for its performance in combat.^[1]



The 99th Flying Training Squadron flies T-1A Jayhawks and they are in the process of painting the tops of the tails of their aircraft red, in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen the "Red Tails".

Colonel Momyer, however, reported to NAAF Deputy Commander Major General John K. Cannon that the 99th was ineffective in combat^[3] and its pilots cowardly, incompetent, or worse, resulting in a critical article in *TIME*. In response, the House Armed Services Committee convened a hearing to determine whether the Tuskegee Airmen experiment should be allowed to continue. Momyer characterized the 99th pilots of being incompetent because they had seen little air-to-air combat. To bolster the recommendation to scrap the project, a member of the committee commissioned and then submitted into evidence, a "scientific" report by the University of Texas that purported to prove that African Americans were of low intelligence and incapable of handling complex situations (such as air combat).



Eight Tuskegee Airmen in front of a P-40 fighter aircraft

Colonel Benjamin Davis forcefully denied the claims by committee members, but only the intervention of Colonel Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell prevented a recommendation for disbandment of the squadron from being sent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. General Hap Arnold ordered an evaluation of all Mediterranean Theater P-40 units be undertaken to determine the true merits of the 99th; the results showed the 99th Fighter Squadron to be at least equal to other units operating the fighter.^[3]

While operating from North Africa the unit supported the reduction of enemy fortifications on Pantelleria and Tunisia.

The 99th supported Allied invasions of Sicily and Italy and provided close air support to the U.S. 5th Army during its assaults on Foggia and Anzio and for French and Polish armies in their attack on Monastery Hill near Cassino.^[4] On January 27 and 28, 1944, *Luftwaffe* Fw 190 fighter-bombers raided Anzio, where the Allies had conducted amphibious landings on January 22. Attached to the 79th Fighter Group, eleven of the 99th Fighter Squadron's pilots shot down enemy fighters, including Captain Charles B. Hall, who claimed two shot down, bringing his aerial victory total to three. The eight fighter squadrons defending Anzio together, claimed 32 German aircraft shot down, while the 99th claimed the highest score among them with 13.^[5]

The squadron earned its second Distinguished Unit Citation on May 12–14, 1944, while attached to the 324th Fighter Group, attacking German positions on Monastery Hill (Monte Cassino), attacking infantry massing on the hill for a counterattack, and bombing a nearby strong point to force the surrender of the German garrison to Moroccan Goumiers.

In mid-1944 the squadron was assigned to conduct bomber escort missions. The unit supported bomber missions over Romania, France, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Greece. For its efforts during the war the squadron was awarded three Distinguished Unit Citations.^[4]

Flying Training

Following the war the squadron returned to the United States where it flew training missions until its inactivation in 1949. It was reactivated in 1988 as a flying training unit. With the closure of Williams Air Force Base, Arizona the squadron moved to Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. Today it operates T-1 Jayhawk aircraft preparing pilots to operate air refueling, airlift, and bomber aircraft.^[4]

Operations

Operations:^[1]

- World War II

Lineage

Lineage:^[1]

- 99th Pursuit Squadron (1941–1942)
- 99th Fighter Squadron (1942–1944)
- 99th Fighter Squadron, Single Engine (1944–1988)
- 99th Flying Training Squadron (1988–Present)



1st Lt. Lee Rayford when he returned to the United States from Italy, where he served with the 99th Fighter Squadron. ca. 1941-1945

Aircraft

Aircraft Operated:^[1]

- P-40 Warhawk (1943–1944)
- P-39 Airacobra (1944)
- P-51 Mustang (1944–1945)
- P-47 Thunderbolt (1944, 1945–1949)
- T-38 Talon (1988–1993)
- T-1 Jayhawk (1993–Present)



99th Fighter Squadron mechanic reloading a P-51 Mustang, during World War II.

References

Notes

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2. My three years with Eisenhower 1942-1945 by Harry C. Butcher
3. Boyne, Walter J. (2013). "Momyer" (<http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2013/August%202013/0813momyer.aspx>). *AIR FORCE Magazine*. 98 No. 8 (August). Retrieved 2013-08-13.
4. "99 FTS Fact Sheet" (<http://www.randolph.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=5896>). U.S. Air Force. Retrieved March 19, 2010.
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Bibliography

External links

- USAF 99th Flying Training Squadron fact sheet (<http://www.afhra.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=10562>)

See also

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=99th_Flying_Training_Squadron&oldid=629034710"

Categories: Military units and formations in Texas | Training squadrons of the United States Air Force

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Assignments

Assignments:^[1]

- U.S. Army Air Corps (1941)
- Air Corps Technical Training Command (1941)
- Southeast Army Air Forces Training Center (1941–1943)
 - Attached: III Fighter Command (19 August 1942 – c. 2 April 1943)
- 12th Air Force (1943)
- XII Tactical Air Command (1943–1944)
 - Attached: 33d Fighter Group (29 May – c. 29 June 1943)
 - Attached: 324th Fighter Group (c. 29 June – 19 July 1943)
 - Attached: 33d Fighter Group (19 July – 16 October 1943)
 - Attached: 79th Fighter Group (16 October 1943 – 1 April 1944)
 - Attached: 324th Fighter Group (1 April – 6 June 1944)
- 332d Fighter Group (1944–1945)
 - Attached: 86th Fighter Group (11–30 June 1944)
- 477th Composite Group (1945–1947)^[6]
- 332d Fighter Wing (1947–1949)
- 82d Flying Training Wing (1988–1993)
- 12th Flying Training Wing (1993–Present)

Bases

Bases stationed:^[1]

- Chanute Field, Illinois (1941)
- Maxwell Field, Alabama (1941)
- Tuskegee, Alabama (1941–1943)
- Casablanca Airfield, French Morocco (1943)
- Qued N'ja Airfield, French Morocco (1943)
- Fardjouna Airfield, Tunisia (1943)
- Licata Airfield, Sicily (1943)
- Termini Airfield, Sicily (1943)
- Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, Sicily (1943)
- Foggia Airfield, Italy (1943)
- Madna Airfield, Italy (1943–1944)
- Capodichino, Italy (1944)
- Cercola, Italy (1944)
- Pignataro, Italy (1944)
- Ciampino Airfield, Italy (1944)
- Orbetello, Italy (1944)
- Ramitelli Airfield, Italy (1944–1945)
- Cattolica, Italy (1945)
- Godman Field, Kentucky (1945–1946)
- Blythe Army Air Base, California (October–November 1946)^[6]
- Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio (1946–1949)
- Williams Air Force Base, Arizona (1988–1993)
- Randolph Air Force Base, Texas (1993–Present)