

319th FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

319th Fighter Squadron constituted, 24 Jun 1942

Activated, 3 Aug 1942

Inactivated, 28 Oct 1945

Activated, 1 Sep 1947

Redesignated 319th Fighter Squadron (All-Weather), 17 Jun 1948

Redesignated 319th Fighter All-Weather Squadron, 20 Jan 1950

Redesignated 319th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 May 1951

Inactivated, 30 Apr 1970

Activated

Inactivated

Inactivated on 1 December 1969

Activated on 1 July 1971

Inactivated on 30 April 1972

Redesignated 319th Fighter Interceptor Training Squadron on 6 June 1975

Activated on 30 June 1975

Inactivated on 30 November 1977

STATIONS

Mitchel Field, NY, 3 Aug 1942

Hartford, CT, 3 Aug 1942

Hillsgrove, RI, 6 Oct 1942-23 Jan 1943
Tafaraoui, Algeria, 1 Mar 1943
Montesquieu, Algeria, 9 Apr 1943
Souk-el- Khemis, Tunisia, 4 Jun 1943
Mateur, Tunisia, 19 Jun 1943
Soliman, Tunisia, 4 Nov 1943
Foggia, Italy, 9 Dec 1943
Lesina, Italy, 29 Mar 1944
Rimini, Italy, 5 Mar 1945
Mondolfo, Italy, 3 Apr 1945
Vincenzo Airfield, Italy, Jul-9 Oct 1945
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 26-28 Oct 1945
Rio Hato, Panama, 1 Sep 1947
France Field, CZ, 14 Jan 1948-29 Apr 1949
McChord AFB, WA, 12 May 1949
Moses Lake AFB, WA, 2 Sep 1949-2 Feb 1952
Suwon AB, Korea, 10 Mar 1952
Johnson AB, Japan, 17 Aug 1954-18 Oct 1955
Bunker Hill AFB, IN, 1 Nov 1955
Homestead AFB, FL, 1 Mar 1963
Malmstrom AFB, MT, 1 Jul 1971-30 Apr 1972
Tyndall AFB, FL, 30 Jun 1975-1 Nov 1977

ASSIGNMENTS

325th Fighter Group, 3 Aug 1942-28 Oct 1945
6th Fighter Wing, 1 Sep 1947
Caribbean Air Command (attached to Provisional Composite Group), 1 Feb 1948
6th Fighter Wing, 1 Jun 1948
5620th Group, 26 Jul 1948
5620th Composite Wing, 12 Oct 1948
Fourth Air Force, 12 May 1949
325th Fighter (later Fighter All Weather; Fighter Interceptor) Group, 1 Jul 1949
4703rd Air Defense Wing, 6 Feb 1952
Western Air Defense Force, 7 Apr 1952
4706th Air Defense Wing, 1 Oct 1955
58th Air Division, 1 Mar 1956
30th Air Division, 1 Sep 1958
Detroit Air Defense Sector, 1 Apr 1959
Chicago Air Defense Sector, 1 Jul 1960
Montgomery Air Defense Sector, 1 Mar 1963
21st Air Division, 1 July 1971 – 30 April 1972
Air Defense Weapons Center, 1 June 1975 – 30 November 1977

ATTACHMENTS

Fifth Air Force, 1 Mar 1952-20 Feb 1954
8th Fighter Bomber Wing, 20 Feb-17 Aug 1954
35th Fighter Interceptor Wing, 17 Aug-1 Sep 1954
Fifth Air Force, 1 Sep 1954-18 Oct 1955

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-40, 1942-1943
P-47, 1943-1944
P-51 1944-1945
P-61, 1947-1948
F-82, 1948-1950
F-94, 1950
F-89, 1957-1960
F-106, 1960-1963
F-104, 1963

COMMANDERS

Capt Lawrence B. Oldham, 3 Aug 1942
Maj Robert L. Baseler, 26 Aug 1942
Capt Walter V. Radovich, 14 Nov 1942
Capt James E. Tucker, 25 Nov 1942
Capt Everett B. Howe, 26 Dec 1942
Capt Robert W. Myers, 28 Jul 1943
Capt Harmon E. Burns, 8 Sep 1943
Maj Anthony Tirk, Jr., Jan 1944
Maj Frank J. Collins, 11 Mar 1944
Capt William J. Rynne, 20 Mar 1944
Capt Raymond E. Hartley, 28 Mar 1944
Maj John E. Perry, Jun 1944
Maj Ralph F. Johnson, 7 Dec 1944
Maj Victor M. Mahr, 1947
Capt Harold E. Plain, 1951
Capt Clifford E. Hudgens, 26 Aug 1951
Capt Walter J. Russell Jr, 3 Oct 1951
Lt Col William F. Haney, 7 Oct 1951
Lt Col Robert V. McHale, 23 Dec 1952
Lt Col Jack West, 17 Jun 1953
Maj Valentine W. Krug, 11 Dec 1953
Lt Col Robert F. Todd, 6 Aug 1954
Maj Edwin F. Gaines, 15 Jun 1955
Lt Col Lee M. Trowbridge, 1956
Lt Col John A. Bell, 18 Oct 1956
Maj Perry A. Johnson, 1958
Lt Col Clark B. Van Deusen, 3 Mar 1959

Lt Col Jack K. Gamble, 1960
Lt Col Walter O. Beane, Jr., 1961
Lt Col Charles W. Jackson, 1 Mar 1963
Col Thomas H. Curtis, 29 Aug 1966
Lt Col Dan S. Wise, 1967
Lt Col Walter P. Meyler, 31 Jul 1967
Col Harlan F. Ball, 1968-31 Dec 1969
Col Albert J. Lenski, 1 Jul 1971
Lt Col Lucius O. Evans, 22 Jul 1971-30 April 1972

HONORS

Service streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Air Offensive, Europe
Tunisia
Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno
Normandy
Northern France
Southern France
North Apennines
Rhineland
Central Europe
Po Valley
Air Combat, EAME Theater

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

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Sardinia, 30 Ju1 1943
Italy, 30 Jan 1944
Korea, 1 Dec 1952-30 Apr 1953

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
23 Mar 1952-27 Jul 1953

EMBLEM



319 Fighter Squadron emblem



Over and through a light blue disc, a stylized brown and white falcon, beak and feet yellow, grasping a red aerial bomb in claws and carrying a caricatured black cat, wearing an orange aviator's helmet and white goggles, firing a "Tommy gun proper; all diving to base with white speed lines trailing. (Approved, 5 Feb 1943)



319 Fighter Interceptor Squadron emblem: On a shield Air Force golden yellow, a caricatured fighting black tom cat, with white markings, wearing white gloves; his mouth and ear shaded red; throwing downward with his right forepaw a large white rocket, with red tip and fin markings; and black tail marking, the disc edged black. (Approved, 28 May 1957)

MOTTO

WE GET OURS AT NIGHT

OPERATIONS

The 319th Fighter Squadron was activated on 3 Aug 1942, at Hartford, Connecticut. One hundred and seventy-eight enlisted men were transferred from the 87th Fighter Squadron and placed under the command of Cptain Lawrence E. Oldham, the only commissioned officer in this nucleus. On 26 Aug, Maj Robert L. Baseler took over the command, which grew until, by 5 Oct, when the squadron moved to Hills Grove, Rhode Island, it numbered twenty-nine officers and three hundred and twelve enlisted men

Training operations went forward, for the pilots and ground crews, while the squadron's strength reached its required number for overseas duty. As a member of the Boston Defense Wing, the 319th flew regular patrols over the New England coast during this period. On 14 Nov, Maj Baseler was transferred to Group Headquarters, a strong disappointment to the squadron because of his much admired qualities of leadership, in the air and as a Commanding Officer. There followed no less than three Commanding Officers for the 319th within six weeks. Captain Walter V. Radovich was succeeded by Captain James E. Tucker, on 25 Nov, who was in turn succeeded by Captain Everett B. Howe, on 26 Dec. Captain Howe remained the Squadron Commander from this date until he was shot down over southern Sardinia on 28 Jul 1943.

The final training period neared its completion with the end of the year and on 2 Jan the Flight Echelon, consisting of the twenty-seven pilots, left Hills Grove by air to begin their long journey to Casablanca. The pilots and their P-40s boarded the carrier U.S.S. Ranger at Norfolk, Virginia on 7 Jan and after 23 days on the cold Atlantic they flew their small P-40s off the aircraft carrier just off the coast of North Africa.

The air echelon left on 3 Jan by train to West Palm Beach, Florida, and went the next day to Miami, where they split up in small groups to take the airliners to Brazil. Sixteen hours flight brought them to Georgetown, Brazil. Next day they flew to Belem and after a night there, took off for Natal. After one tour of the city, the setting of Tobacco Road was clean, by comparison. It was the Echelon's first glimpse of such a low scale of living, old and dirty dwellings, and grime and filth of a civilized city. Five days there were quite enough and they were all glad to see the Pan American Clipper which was to carry them over the Atlantic. The trip was smooth and uneventful. After a time at Fisherman's Lake, during which they toured several native villages, they were flown to Accra, the meeting place for the several groups of the Air Echelon. From there it was a short hop to Casablanca.

The Ground Echelon, meanwhile, composed of six officers and one hundred and eighty-eight enlisted men, with 1st Lt. Leroy W. Short as Commanding Officer, was completing its final preparations for embarkation. On 22 Jan they entrained for the staging area, Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where they remained until 7 February. On that date they took a train to New York harbor and that evening boarded the U.S.S. Lyon for the crossing. The trip to Oran harbor took fourteen days and, while it was no pleasure cruise for the "over-the-rail" boys in that jammed transport, no enemy action disturbed its security. By truck, train and a six mile hike, in the moonlight, they reached "Mud Hill", a bivouac area with an apt name. After a week the Ground Echelon moved again to the Tafaraoui Air Base, about thirty miles from Oran. There, on the same day, 1 Mar, they were joined by the Air and Flight Echelons.

The squadron remained at Tafaraoui until 9 April, training in the air and on the ground and becoming accustomed to the contrasts of African weather, the salesmanship of the Arabs, and operations under field conditions. Montesquieu, a base 3,000 feet above sea level near the Tunisian frontier by which most of the squadron was flown in C-47 transports, was only 75 miles from the northern Tunisian front or 15 or 20 minutes Messerschmitt time, and raids were a strong possibility. There the pilots quickly learned the terrain and on 17 April, the 319th flew

on its first combat mission, against the Mateur Airfield. From this date, until 13 May when General Von Arnim surrendered, eleven missions were flown by our pilots, nearly all escorting medium bombers over objectives in Tunisia. Our P-40s shot down one JU-52 and one Me-109 and destroyed two more JU-52s on the ground. Numerous dive-bombing attacks in which our planes carried 500 and 1000 pound bombs destroyed enemy motor transports and shipping. We had no losses during these operations, nor were any escorted bombers lost due to enemy aerial activity.

The 319th now concentrated its attention on southern Sardinia and Pantelleria. The number of missions per week increased until, when we moved up to a new base at Souk-el-Khemis, in Tunisia, almost daily missions were in order. During the height of the air war against Pantelleria, two and even three flights a day were made, in spite of intense heat and an epidemic of diarrhea which prostrated an alarming percentage of pilots and ground personnel. A great many missions were flown in which 1000 pound bombs were carried. (No other P-40 Group in this theater had used them.) A total of over 100,000 pounds of bombs were dropped by this squadron, alone, on objectives in Tunisia and Pantelleria up to 11 Jun, the day the island surrendered. Our victories for total operations, thirty-eight missions, had now reached twenty-four enemy planes shot down in combat. In addition, two merchant ships were shot up and left burning, a radar vessel was sunk, two JU-52s and six German flying boats were destroyed on the ground and water. Our own losses were seven planes and six pilots. Several of these pilots are almost certainly prisoners of war. Not one escorted bomber had been lost due to enemy aerial activity.

In the operations against Sardinia and Sicily until the fall of the latter, our record was maintained. On 19 Jun the squadron, and Group, moved up to Mateur Airfield #2. The airfield near Mateur provided no green fields for the tent area. The ground was the same rock-hard and cracked earth we had stumbled over at El Khemis. The flies were not so bad, at first anyway, but the grasshoppers in their thousands made a meal out of anything from rifle slings to mosquito netting. Not even G.I. shoes were safe from their foraging. Scorpions were numerous also. Airfields, railroads, radar stations, ports and ground installations of all kinds were pounded by dive-bombing and shot up by strafing attacks. On a fighter sweep 22 Jul 1943, 319th P-40s shot down twelve enemy planes in a combat near Cagliari, Sardinia without a single loss.

On the 101st mission flown by the 325th Group the 319th lost is Commanding Officer, Maj Howe. His plane was hit by flak and he was forced to bail out eight miles west of Capoterra. Circling planes saw him land safely and wave to them. Lt. Thomas B. Johnson and F/O James E. Beck, both listed as missing in action, later escaped from a German prison camp in Italy with confirmation of Maj Howe's safety. Maj Howe had destroyed four enemy fighters in combat and his qualities of leadership as the squadron commander were of the same excellence as his flying skill and courage. His successor was Cptain Robert W. Myers, former Operations Officer and a natural and popular choice for the duties of the Commanding Officer.

In 100 missions our Group had destroyed a total of 103 enemy planes. Forty of these were shot down by 319th pilots, whose losses were 10 pilots and twelve P-40s. Not one escorted bomber had yet been lost to enemy aerial attack. We shared also in numerous Group successes in strafing attacks on grounded aircraft and shipping. On 5 Aug three of our P-40s found a German submarine on the surface and strafed the black and white swastika on the conning tower until the sub exploded, up-ended and sank – a real bag for fighter aircraft.

Our record as to aerial victories and losses at the end of the Sicilian campaign, 17 Aug, stood as it did on organizational day two weeks before.

No one department of the squadron should be singled out for particular recognition as all departments have been uniform in the high degree of their efficiency and performance of duty. , the maintenance record, as the one most nearly touching flying operations, should be cited. The number of aircraft in a fighter squadron which is expected to be "hot" – readied for flight at all times is 80 percent of the total. The 319th maintenance level has never fallen below 85 percent. During the Tunisian and Pantellarian air offensives, between 85 and 90 percent of all our P-40s were in constant operational condition, in spite of the fact that, during the height of the air war against Pantelleria, thirty to forty percent of the ground crews were suffering from weakening attacks of dysentery and heat prostration. During the battle for Sicily the percentage of planes which completed missions varied between 90 and 95 percent, a figure which would come very close to a record for fighter aircraft anywhere.

Operations continued against Sardinia without let up but little resistance was encountered in the continual sweeps and bombing missions. On 28 Aug, Collins shot down his fifth Me-109 to become the first Ace in the squadron. This engagement was the only one which occurred between the fall of Sicily and the surrender of Italy, though dive-bombing missions continued until that date.

On 8 Sep, the day the Italian armistice was announced, Captain Harmon E. Burns succeeded Maj Myers as squadron commander, the latter having completed his tour of duty. Although Italy had surrendered, it was not known which airdromes and localities remained in German hands; therefore there was no flying for nearly two weeks while the pilots and ground crews watched the news of the Salerno landing, begun on the 9th, and fretted their forced inactivity. The rumors about receiving P-47s became a reality.

Training operations were begun with the new P-47 type aircraft in Oct, the first P-47 having been flown to the Mateur field by Colonel Baseler on 11 Oct. Because of intermittent and heavy rains continually interrupting the training schedule with possibilities of planes being bogged down for an indefinite period, the squadron began its move to the Soliman A/D, the last permanent base and in many ways the most agreeable base in Africa. The move was begun on 4 Nov and by 7 Nov training operations had been resumed.

The long awaited move to Italy was begun on 30 Nov when an advanced echelon left Soliman to prepare a bivouac area at Bizerte where the ground echelon was to await transportation. An air

echelon, transported in C-47s, arrived at the Foggia Main Airdrome on 9 Dec. Meanwhile, the ground echelon personnel had been separated into two groups, one to leave Bizerte on 12 Dec and land at Taranto, Italy on the 17th while the remaining group was to leave Bizerte on 24 Dec and dock at Naples on the 27th. From their respective debarkation points these two groups completed the move to Foggia Main by train and truck.

The first P-47 mission, on 14 Dec, was one escorting B-17s over Corfu. Five more operations in succession were milk runs but on 30 Dec, twelve Me-109s were attacked near Pescara and three destroyed, two by F/O Richard L. Catlin of the 319th. On the same day the squadron moved from the main Foggia field to Celone #1, an airfield approximately 7 miles NW of the city of Foggia. It was a wet cold uncomfortable move. Our area looked like the one at Tafaraoui after the usual rain. It rained the day and night we moved up but the real storm, the worst southern Italy experienced in many years, was reserved for New Year's eve and New Year's morning. Although 5 tents were blown down during the night the kitchen remained intact and an excellent turkey dinner for New Year's Day compensated in part for all the inconveniences suffered. In a few days the weather cleared and the storm was forgotten. In Jan 1944, Maj Anthony Tirk, Jr. Group Engineering Officer, succeeded Maj Burns as squadron commander. The squadron participated in thirty-two missions during the month of Jan, destroying 15 enemy aircraft for a loss of three P-47s.

LTC Tirk, 319th Commanding Officer, was listed as missing in action after an aerial encounter with approximately 50 enemy fighters on 11 Mar. He was succeeded by Maj Collins, the leading Ace of the squadron, with 9 victories and 2 probables. Maj Collins completed his tour of duty and left for home on 20 Mar and Captain William A. Rynne, an Ace flying with the 317th Squadron, transferred to the 319th and assumed command.

A move to the Lesina A/D began on 25 Mar when an advanced echelon left Celone airfield to prepare a bivouac area at the new field. The movement was completed on 29 Mar when the planes landed at Lesina on their return from an escort mission over Turin, Italy. The move was successfully completed without the slightest alteration of operational plans, a fact which attests clearly to the efficiency and smooth functioning of all sections of the squadron and group. Out of fourteen missions during Mar the squadron hung up eighteen victories for five losses – the best record in the group for the month.

On 28 Mar, the last mission to take off and land at the Celone A/F, the squadron suffered heavy casualties. Lieutenants A.O. Jones and Hudson and the 319th O., Captain Rynne, were lost to enemy action. Captain Raymond E. Hartley assumed command of the squadron.

The squadron received the new P-51 Mustangs on 15 May and began an intensive transition program while continuing to operate with P-47s. On 27 May the squadron participated in its first mission with the new type aircraft, a heavy bomber escort attacking marshalling yards in southern France.

On 2 Jun the squadron participated in the historic Italy-to-Russia shuttle raid. Thirteen enlisted men, crew chiefs and armorers, were transported in B-17s to Russian bases to maintain the squadron's P-51s. One B-17, in which S/Sgt. Austin Cronin was flying, was lost to flak. Little hope was held out for him, but several minutes later it was learned that he had parachuted safely, and was a prisoner of war.

At the close of Jun, Captain Hartley, who had flown nearly 100 missions, returned to the States and Maj John E. Perry assumed command of the squadron.

Missions were flown almost daily during Jul since excellent weather prevailed throughout that period. It was during this period that the 15th AAF opened a drive against the enemy's vital oil refineries and storage facilities and the Group participated in repeated attacks against Ploesti, Brux, and Blechhammer. Five enemy aircraft in an attacking force of approximately 50 were destroyed and 3 damaged over Giurgiu, Rumania on 3 Jul by pilots of the 319th. The Group had another successful day on 26 Jul when they destroyed 13 enemy fighters over Austria. Four of the enemy aircraft destroyed were accounted for by the 319th pilots.

The Group flew 27 missions during Aug and on only six did the enemy fighters offer resistance. On 3 Aug, thirty-four German fighters attempted to drive off the B-24s attacking the Manzell Aircraft Factory. Of the 10 enemy fighters destroyed without loss to the P-51s, three were credited to the 319th Squadron.

After having played such a large part in the destruction of German war industry in Central Europe, the 325th now turned its attention toward the west for the impending invasion of southern France.

For several days missions were flown against heavy gun positions defending the French coast. Just prior to the actual invasion planes of the 319th were transferred to the Tarquinia Airfield in order to provide better coverage for troop carrying C-47s which we were to escort.

Our missions were carried out successfully with no losses of either planes or personnel and the squadron moved back to Lesina to continue attacks on the enemy's war industries and lines of communication.

Twenty-two missions were flown during Sep, several of which were highly successful strafing attacks against enemy airfields, rail communications and troop concentrations. Targets ranged over a wide area from Greece to southwestern Poland and northern Italy. The outstanding strafing attack of the month was the attack on the Ecka A/D in Yugoslavia on 8 Sep. In this attack every one of the thirty-seven planes on the airdrome were destroyed while a neighboring airfield was also attacked and six of the seven enemy planes grounded there were also destroyed. The low-level attack proved to be one of the most successful strafing jobs of its kind ever completed in this theater. The Debreczen A/D, in Hungary, was also attacked in the month of Sep with a total of fifty-nine enemy planes claimed destroyed.

On 16 Oct, one flight of the 319th P-51s led by Lt. S.K. Anderson distinguished itself with what is probably the most outstanding and gallant success of its kind in our history. During an escort mission against the Brux O/R in Czechoslovakia, a large force of enemy fighters was observed to the west of the bomber formation. Climbing into the sun, Lt. Anderson led his flight of 4 P-51s in an attack upon the enemy force which consisted of approximately forty-eight Me-109s and FW-190s. In the aerial battle that followed, Lt. Anderson destroyed three enemy fighters probably destroyed another and damaged a fifth fighter while members of his flight destroyed three more. Despite the enemy's superiority of 12 to 1, the P-51s suffered no losses.

In Nov, twenty-one missions were completed. Aside from several strafing operations of minimum effort, there was little action. Lt. Whitmire was shot down while strafing an enemy column in Yugoslavia on 21 Nov, but returned safely to Italy after a series of adventures with Yugoslavian partisans.

Because of the increasing number of enemy rocket and jet propelled aircraft operating over Germany during Dec, it became necessary to provide escort for the P-38 reconnaissance planes making daily runs over enemy targets. The jets easily outran any of our aircraft but a flight could cope with their greater speed by making head on passes. In turns, the P-51s easily evaded the jets. Several missions a day became normal SOP and there was much work done in training pilots how to combat the Me-163 and Me-262. On 28 Dec, the Group had its last big day of 1944. After an escort mission over Kolin and Pardubice, Czechoslovakia, the P-51s went to the deck to strafe railroads and highways as well as two airdromes. Seven enemy planes and twenty-six locomotives were destroyed in these attacks for the loss of one P-51.

The squadron changed commanding officers on 7 Dec, Maj Ralph F. Johnson succeeding LTC John E. Perry, who was transferred to the 15th Fighter Command.

Combat operations and training missions were greatly hampered by weather conditions during the month of Jan. The squadron participated in a total of 11 combat missions, the Majority of which were high-altitude escorts in attacks on oil refineries in Germany and Austria. There were no losses or aerial victories during this period.

At this time the constant battering of the German Armies by Allied forces from all directions and the 30-day furlough plan fostered squadron morale to a new high. One officer and ten enlisted men departed for temporary duty in the States under this new plan. This event highlighted the squadron's history during the month it completed its second year of overseas duty; , the awarding of the third "E" flag in four months for maintenance achievement also made the spotlight.

The squadron moved from the Lesina A/D on 2 Mar to Miramare, a small resort town four miles south of Rimini where the Squadron Headquarters and living area were to be located while operating from the Rimini A/D. Captain E. W. Buckland in the advanced echelon requisitioned a hotel and eleven buildings to be used as sleeping quarters by 319th personnel. It was just like moving from "rags to riches", because never before had our quarters been in a building of this

type. After the five days of preparation, on 7 Mar, the last C-47 transport landed with personnel and equipment. Overnight the new area took on all appearances of a permanent base.

During the month the squadron participated in 33 missions, one of which penetrated to the city of Berlin where escorted heavy bombers attacked the Daimler Benz Tank Works. The mission marked the longest heavy bomber and Mustang flight ever flown over Europe and was the first attempt of the 15th AAF to attack targets within the German capital. Victories for the month were credited to Captain Voss and Lt. Chamberlain (Me-109s) and F/O Barnes (2 FW-190s). Six 319th pilots were lost to enemy fighters and flak during Mar.

The movement from Miramare to Mondolfo A/D, the second such move within a 30 day period, constituted the tenth move in the history of the squadron. Despite the move, squadron combat operations reached a new high in April with the squadron participating in 42 missions. Since few strategic targets remained for the 15th AAF, the bulk of missions flown were combined with tactical operations in direct support of the ground troops. The destruction of a jet-propelled Me-262, the first victory over a jet aircraft within our Group, was credited to the 319th Squadron's Commanding Officer, Maj Johnson, on 18 April. The next day, Lt. Gertin destroyed a FW-190 while slow-timing his airplane over the front lines in Italy.

Day be day news reports showed spectacular events resulting in the apparent collapse of organized German resistance. Each news lecture was attended by more and more personnel. Their hearts began to beat faster with the thought of victory and the trip back home as being a step nearer each day. Finally, we read in the "Stars and Stripes" one day: "It's All Over Over Here" and we could hardly realize it. Events had moved so swiftly in the smashing defeat of the Swastika State that we were overtaken by surprise even though we could see the end drawing near. With the collapse of Germany, began the break up of the 319th Squadron.

Personnel of the 319th Squadron in their two years of combat operations have been awarded the following medals for aerial achievements and for outstanding individual accomplishments among ground personnel: Distinguished Service Cross – 1, Silver Star – 5, Purple Heart – 9, Distinguished Flying Cross – 66, Legion of Merit – 1, Soldiers Medal – 4, Bronze Stars – 10.

The 319th Squadron also played an important part in the two highly successful fighter sweeps for which the Group was awarded two Distinguished Unit Citations. The first of these attacks, 39 Jul 1943, over southern Sardinia, resulted in the destruction of 21 enemy fighters while the second attack over the Udine area in Italy, on 30 Jan 1944, resulted in the total destruction of 37 enemy aircraft.

The 319th was stationed in Italy until it returned to the States for deactivation on Oct 28, 1945.

The squadron was activated in Panama on 1 Sep 1947.

They moved to Howard AFB, Rio Hato, Panama in 1947. On Jan 14, 1948 they moved to France Field, Canal Zone. The move was necessitated by a dispute with the Panamanian government over the leasing rights and student riots. The Air Force vacated 13 Panamanian bases and moved to the Canal Zone. The Air Force flew the Black Widows from there until late Dec when the North American F-82 Twin Mustang started to arrive and they began transition into the F-82s.

As soon as the Lockheed F-94A Starfire became available the 325th Fighter Group was slated for transition into these fighters. On April 23, 1950 the 317th and 319th moved back to McChord to join the 318th to commence conversion training. The famed WWII "Checkertail Clan" was once again a complete fighter group. In the fall of 1950 the squadron transitioned into F-94As. By Jan 1, 1951 the 325th F(AW)G was operating a mixed bag of 19 F-82s and F-94s. On May 1, 1951 the 325th was re-designated once again, as the 325th Fighter Interceptor Group, which was more in line with their new role, since it had been determined that the F-94 was not actually the all-weather fighter it had been made out to be.

On Jan 24, 1952 Headquarters USAF in Washington decided to commit the 319th FIS to the Korean War. The 319th had been the first of the five Continental Air Command F-82 squadrons to re-equip with the F-94A, and were considered the most experienced F-94 squadron. They were based at Larson AFB, Washington when the Warning Order came down, and with three weeks they were aboard CVE-86, Sitkoh Bay, enroute to Japan.

The 319th FIS became operational at Suwon on Mar 23 with the assigned task of providing Combat Air Patrols (CAPs), during the hours of darkness or adverse weather, to protect United Nations interests, to provide fighter escorts for strategic or tactical bombers as required, and to seek out and destroy enemy aircraft. With

As of Mar 1 the 319th FIS had twenty-six combat ready aircrews and twenty-five F-94s.

During the Spring of 1952 the 68th and 339th FISs continued working with their training and defensive commitments in Japan. They conducted mock exercises against their own detachments and other squadrons within their own groups. In Korea, due to heavy traffic in the Suwon area, (two F-86 and three F-80s

squadrons were based there, along with Marine squadrons plus myriad transient transport aircraft), training was limited. But there was plenty of opportunity for proficiency flying and both practice and actual night interceptor missions after sunset when the day fighters shied away.

On Nov 1, 1952 General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, USAF Chief of Staff, personally rescinded the restriction that would not permit the F-94 to operate north of the bomb line. LTC Robert V. McHale, Commanding Officer of the 319th FIS received orders releasing his squadron to go on

offensive patrols this same date. The first missions were flown in a holding pattern or race track profile from northeast to southwest across the middle of Mig Alley. This would position the fighters to breakout of the pattern at any time to intercept an enemy aircraft attempting to come south to heckle or intercept bombers.

Cpt Ben Fithian and RO 1Lt Sam Lyons of the 319th FIS, on the night of 31 Jan 1953 they scored the 319th FIS first Korean war kill when they shot down a Lavochkin LA-9

On Jun 7 LTC Robert V. McHale, the commanding officer of the 319th FIS, and the squadron's lead radar observer, Captain Samuel Hoster were escorting a B-29 mission in progress when they encountered a Mig-15 near the Yalu. In dispatching this Mig they became the first jet night fighter in history to shoot down an enemy fighter while defending a bombing mission as it was taking place. Unfortunately, this team was killed on the night of Jun 12/ 13 while attempting an intercept against a bogie southwest of Chodo. Their F-94, 51-5503, simply disappearing.

By far, though, the most severe loss incurred by the 319th FIS occurred neither with the F-94 nor from enemy action. It was the failure of a generator that caused an engine fire that brought down a C-124 at Tachikawa on Jun 18, 1953. Killed were a total of 129, including a dozen men from the 319th.

Another F-94, 51-5384, was lost on Jun 23 when it crashed twelve miles north of Suwon. Killed were 1st Lt.'s David E. Leyshon and his radar observer James F. Aylward. The cause of the loss was never determined, and even though it was on a combat mission, the aircrew is not listed among the USAF's Korean War casualties.

The 319th FIS's last encounter with an enemy aircraft occurred the following day when Captain Wayne A. Melendrez and radar observer 2nd Lt. Joseph Smith were CAPing during a night B-29 mission near the Yalu River. They made several hits on what was assumed to be a Mig-15, but were only credited with a damaged.

The last F-94 lost to the 319th FIS in a combat related incident was 51 -5389 on Jul 8, 1953. Details are unknown.

After Korea the 319th was moved to Johnson AFB, Japan, and from there to Bunker Hill AFB, Ind. where it was equipped with F-94C Starfires.

After suffering the setback of having its maintenance hangar destroyed by fire in Jul, 1956, the squadron again assumed its alert commitment Sept 1, 1956. During the summer of 1957 the unit received F-89J Scorpions to replace the F-94C aircraft.

As a result of the proficiency displayed in rocket firing at Yuma, Ariz, in early 1959, the 319th was chosen to represent the 30th Air Division at the annual ADC weapons meet, "William Tell" in Oct, 1959 at Tyndall AFB, Fla. The team representing the 319th took first place in the F-89J category and also had the highest total score of the 12 interceptor squadrons competing in the

world wide weapons meet.

In February, 1960, the first two F-104 aircraft arrived at Bunker Hill AFB, and 319th commenced to become alert ready in the Mach 2 aircraft.

1964 22 Jan A F-104B 57-1306, of the 319th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, crashes at 1330 hrs. on Santa Rosa Island, one mile E of Fort Walton Beach, Florida, shortly after departure from Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, to return to Homestead. The pilot, Cpt Lucius O. Evans, ejects safely just before the fighter impacts in sand dunes just short of the Coronado Motor Hotel, parachuting into the Choctawhatchee Bay. He is then transported to the Eglin base hospital by Assistant Police Chief Jack McSwain, where he is reported to have sustained no injuries. More than sixty occupants at the hotel are not injured although flaming wreckage sprays an area close to the business. Eyewitness Andrew Christiansen, of Chester, Connecticut, reported that the aircraft was on fire as it descended and observed Cpt Evans' ejection from the Starfighter. A secondary explosion after the impact further scatters the burning wreckage.



F-82 at Moses Lake





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