

339 FLIGHT TEST SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

339 Fighter Squadron constituted, 29 Sep 1942

Activated, 3 Oct 1942

Redesignated 339 Fighter Squadron (Twin-Engine), 23 Feb 1943

Redesignated 339 Fighter Squadron, Two-Engine, 20 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 1 Jan 1946

Redesignated 339 Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 13 Jul 1946

Activated, 25 Aug 1946

Redesignated 339 Fighter Squadron (All-Weather), 20 Feb 1947

Redesignated 339 Fighter Squadron, All-Weather, 10 Aug 1948

Redesignated 339 Fighter All-Weather Squadron, 20 Jan 1950

Redesignated 339 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 25 Apr 1951

Inactivated, 15 Jan 1958

Redesignated 339 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 19 Dec 1975

Activated, 30 Dec 1975

Inactivated, 1 Jul 1983

2875 Test Squadron designated and activated, 15 Jan 1988

339 Tactical Fighter Squadron and 2875 Test Squadron consolidated, 1 Oct 1992

Redesignated 339 Test Squadron, 1 Oct 1992

Redesignated 339 Flight Test Squadron, 15 Mar 1994

STATIONS

New Caledonia, 3 Oct 1942 (detachment operated from Guadalcanal, 3 Oct 1942–1 Dec 1943)
Guadalcanal, 29 Dec 1943
Stirling Island, 15 Jan 1944
Sanspor, New Guinea, 15 Aug 1944
Middleburg Island, 19 Sep 1944 (operated from Morotai, 13 Feb–25 Mar 1945)
San Jose, Mindoro, 22 Feb 1945
Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 6 Mar–11 Dec 1945
Camp Stoneman, CA, 30 Dec 1945–1 Jan 1946
Ft William McKinley, Luzon, 25 Aug 1946
Johnson AB, Japan, 15 Dec 1946
Yokota, Japan, 1 Apr 1950
Johnson AB, Japan, 4 Aug 1950
Chitose AB, Japan, 20 Jul 1954–15 Jan 1958
Moody AFB, GA, 30 Dec 1975–1 Jul 1983
Robins AFB, GA, 15 Jan 1988

ASSIGNMENTS

347 Fighter Group, 3 Oct 1942–1 Jan 1946
Thirteenth Air Force, 25 Aug 1946
347 Fighter (later, 347th Fighter All-Weather) Group, 20 Feb 1947
Fifth Air Force, 24 Jun 1950
314 Air Division, 1 Dec 1950
Japan Air Defense Force, 1 Mar 1952
Fifth Air Force, 1 Sep 1954
39 Air Division, 1 Mar 1955–15 Jan 1958
347 Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Dec 1975–1 Jul 1983
Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, 15 Jan 1988

ATTACHMENTS

35 Fighter [later, 35 Fighter-Interceptor] Wing, 1 Jul 1949–1 Dec 1950
6162 Air Base Wing, 1 Dec 1950–24 May 1951
35 Fighter-Interceptor Wing, 25 May 1951–20 Jul 1954
49 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 20 Jul–18 Nov 1954
4 Fighter-Interceptor Wing, 18 Nov 1954–15 Sep 1957

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-400, 1942
P-39, 1942–1943
P-38, 1942–1945
P(later F)-61, 1947–1950
F-82, 1949–1951
F-94, 1951–1955
F-80, 1953–1954
F-86, 1955–1957

F-4, 1976-1983

COMMANDERS

Maj Dale D. Brannon, 3 Oct 1942
Capt John W. Mitchell, 25 Nov 1942
Maj John S. Evans, 21 May 1943
Maj Henry W. Lawrence, 30 Aug 1943
Maj John Z. Endress, 18 Feb 1944
Capt Jarrold D. Lilliedoll, 21 Oct 1944
1 Lt Bartow M. Thomas, 23 Oct 1944
Capt Joseph C. Willis Jr., 26 Oct 1944
Capt Glenn A. Starmer, 8 Nov 1944
Capt Joseph C. Willis Jr., 24 Dec 1944
Capt Bartow M. Thomas, 2 Jan 1945
Capt Russell J. Christensen, 8 Jan 1945
Maj Joseph C. Willis Jr., 18 Jan 1945
Capt Jimmie W. Baker, 15 Jun 1945
Capt Walter I. Olson, 11 Jul 1945
Capt George O. Febreau, Nov 1945
Lt Col Thomas R. Waddleton, Nov 1945-1 Jan 1946
Unkn, 25 Aug 1946-1947
Capt John G. Bradley, by 20 Feb 1947
Lt Col Clarence A. Martin, 2 Aug 1947
Maj Alexander S. Tainish, 3 Dec 1948
Lt Col Ben I. Mayo, 1 Nov 1949
Maj James W. Little, Mar 1950
Maj Robert E. Douglas, Oct 1950
Maj Charles W. Lasko, 11 Nov 1950
Maj James W. Little, 10 Jul 1951
Maj Carl D. Peterson, by Oct 1951
Maj Joe F. Stroud, by Jul 1954
Lt Col Bryant Y. Anderson, by 19 Apr 1956-15 Jan 1958
Unkn, 30 Dec 1975-4 May 1976
Lt Col Robert L. Rutherford, 5 May 1976
Lt Col William E. Ardern, 4 Feb 1977
Lt Col Bruce J. Lotzbire, 17 Apr 1978
Lt Col James M. Hurley, c. Jan 1980
Lt Col Stuart A. Hodgemen, 23 Oct 1981-unkn
Unkn, 15 Jan-8 Feb 1988
Maj John R. Turk, 9 Feb 1988
Lt Col Wayne A. McKinnis, 8 Aug 1988
Lt Col Michael H. Addy, 9 Jul 1990
Lt Col Thomas U. Mead, 20 Jul 1992
Lt Col Stephen J. Pitotti, 22 Jul 1994

Lt Col Carl A. Hawkins, 6 Feb 1998
Lt Col Terry D. Tichenor, 19 Dec 1999
Lt Col Daniel P. Erickson, 1 Oct 2001
Lt Col Richard J. Burke, 15 Apr 2002
Lt Col Amand F. Heck, 15 Feb 2006
Lt Col John R. Nowak, 2009
Lt Col Dante C. Badia, 15 Mar 2013

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
China Defensive
Guadalcanal
New Guinea
Northern Solomons
Bismarck Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive

Korea
UN Defensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Netherlands East Indies, 7, 20, and 22d Nov 1944

Presidential Unit Citation [1942]

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan 1977–30 Apr 1978
1 May 1978–31 May 1979
1 Jan 1991–31 Dec 1992
1 Jan 1993–31 Dec 1994
1 Jan 1997–31 Dec 1998
1 Jan 1999–31 Dec 2000
1 Jul 2005–30 Jun 2007

[1 Jul]-31 Aug 2007
1 Sep 2007-2 Sep 2008
3 Sep 2008-2 Sep 2009
[3 Sep 2009]-30 Sep 2010

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

EMBLEMS



339 Fighter Squadron emblem, Over and through a medium blue disc, border black, a yellow gremlin, wearing red trunks and shoes, holding in the left hand a large white club with red and white spike through the end, and standing with feet on the backs of two clack falcons, heads white, beak and feet yellow, tongue red, in flight. (Approved, 2 Dec 1943)



319th Fighter Interceptor Squadron emblem



339 Tactical Fighter Squadron emblem: On an Air Force Blue disc, spattered with White stars, a Silver colored dragon, with Red eyeballs, White pupils, and flames of fire from his mouth, rearing upward between two large cloud formations, issuing from the sides of the disc of the second color. (Approved, 19 Oct 1955)



2875 Test Squadron emblems

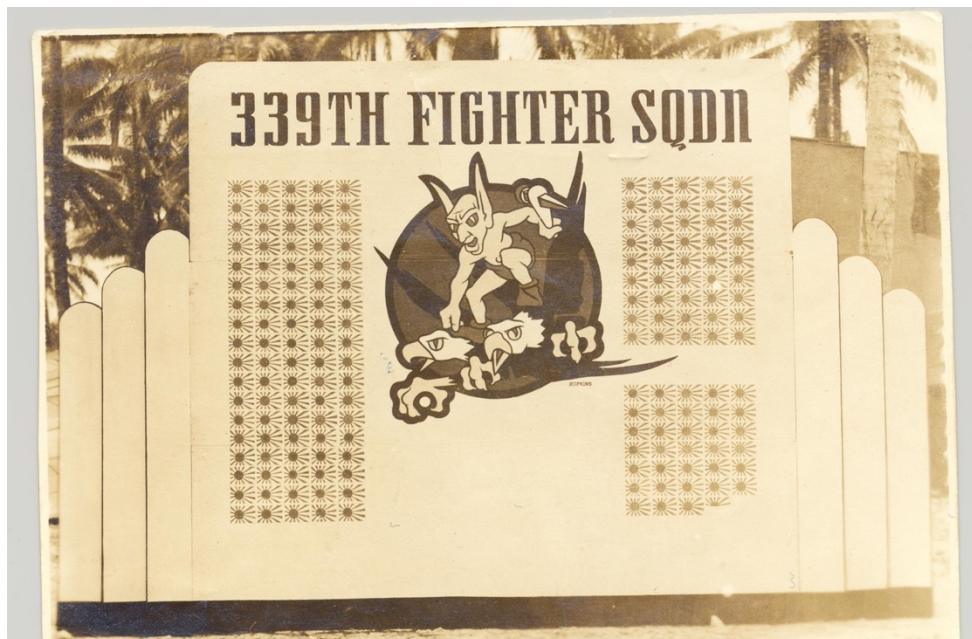


339 Flight Test Squadron emblem: On a disc Azure, issuant from clouds in dexter base and sinister chief Argent, detailed of the first, a dragon Silver Gray, detailed of the field, eyed of the

second, langued Gules, four pole stars in chief and four in base of the second, all within a narrow border Black. Attached below the disc, a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "339 FLIGHT TEST SQ" in Black letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The dragon is symbolic of the unit, ferocious and all-conquering. The dragon is reared to the attack position, portraying an attack by the interceptor in weather (clouds), clear skies represented by the background, or night represented by the stars. All elements combined to symbolize the Squadron whose mission is day, night, or all weather interception. (Approved, 25 Feb 2008)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS



Coronet Banner. From 22 March through 21 April the 347 TFWs 339 TFS from March Air Force Base, California, deployed to Korea to practice movement procedures and to familiarize its aircrews with the Korean flying environment.

1983

The 4th Fighter (All-Weather) Squadron returned to its home base at Naha Air Base, Okinawa and the 20th Air Force, while the 68th and 339 F(AW)S's returned to their respective bases in Japan. At this time the 68th F(AW)S was also assigned the task of defending the skies of South Korea, in addition to that of southern Japan. They would do this from Japan at first, and then later from Suwon, South Korea when it was recaptured from the communist forces. They also were tasked with flying night interdiction missions, weather reconnaissance and an occasional fighter escort missions. In support of this effort, the 339 F(AW)S would take over some of the original defensive missions assigned to the 68th in Japan, and along with the 4th F(AW)S detail of some F-82s and air and ground crews on aTDY basis to bolster the 68th's combat efforts in Korea.

So, commencing in March 1951 a shipment of F-94Bs was sent to Japan and transition training began. The first F-94Bs were assigned to the 339 on April 6, serial numbers 50-836 and 838. (The 339 was redesignated from F(AW)S to Fighter Interceptor Squadron on April 25,1951, as were all of the previously designated F(AW)S's). Ten more arrived before the month was out. Also arriving with the aircraft was the F-94-1 MTU, (Mobile Training Unit), from Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois. After spending 6,013 man hours teaching the various systems and idiosyncrasies of the F-94 to both air and ground crews of the 339 FIS at Johnson Air Base the MTU moved on May 16 to Itazuke AB where they started all over again, training the men of the 68th FIS. Ten days later the 339 FIS had eighteen aircrew members in training, of which twelve were 75% combat ready, three were 50% combat ready, and four were 25% combat ready. -At a glance these figures may not seem too impressive, but they reflect a period when a squadron was wide-spread in operations: Having F-82s on combat alert for the defense of Japan, flying F-51 Ds and F-80Cs for gunnery training, and transition training was being conducted with T-33s. Today's Air Force does not permit a pilot to be certified in more than one aircraft at a time. Ground crews were also having to maintain the F-82s on combat alert, prepare some for transfer to other squadrons, learn the systems of the F-94 and run acceptance checks and inspections for those that were coming to their own squadron, as well as those allocated to the 4th and 68th FIS's. It was a period of intense activity that was marred by one major accident, on July 11, but no one was injured and the damage was repairable.

On July 10 Major Charles W. Lasko left the 339 for assignment to the 35th Fighter Interceptor Group at Johnson Air Base. (The 35th FIG had just returned from K-9, Korea, "Less Personnel and Equipment" on May 25, replacing the 6162nd Air Base Group). Lasko had been the commanding officer of the 339 since September 1950 when he replaced Lt. Colonel James W. Little, who, in turn replaced him once again. Little, and Captain Phillip Porter, his radar operator, had been one of the first to score a kill with the F-82 when the Korean War commenced).

On August 17 the 339 FIS faced its first Operational Readiness Test, which was an examination on how well the squadron could be expected to function if they were to be thrown into battle. Little and the men were gratified that all of their assigned aircraft were ready for scrambles through outstanding maintenance efforts. But, due to adverse weather conditions, the pilots and radar observers could only stand cockpit alerts. There was a "fleet wide" restriction on the F-94s wing tanks at this time, due to a failure to feed properly, which meant that they could only be flown on their internal fuel, and thus only had a forty minute duration of flight. Too little fuel to perform a mission and then proceed to an alternate air field in the weather they were encountering at the time of the exercise.

In September the 339 flew 416:10 hours in their F-94s, T-33s and F-51s. Some of the F-94 missions had to be canceled because of wet runways at Johnson. The instrument runway at Johnson was adequate for all-weather takeoffs, but it was deemed too short for a safe landing when it was wet and braking action was reduced. This would be an on-going problem for as long as fighters flew from there. A highlight of the month, though, was the escort of Minister Yoshida and his delegation's return from San Francisco via Pan American Airways by three of the squadron's F-94s.

While the 68th FIS continued to maintain a detachment of F-82s on strip alert at Suwon, they also began transition training into all-weather jet fighters. The F-94-1 MTU arrived at Itazuke on May 21 and remained there until June 30 when they moved on to Naha to work with the 4th FIS. The MTU, and the Technical Representatives from the associated component manufacturers continued to conduct intensive training on the AN/APG-33 radar, A-1C gunsight, and the afterburning J-33-A-33 engine. It was during this period, and through October that the 339 experienced a massive influx and departure of people as men rotated in and out of the squadron on TOY while they studied the F-94. They also had, briefly, all of the F-94s destined for the 4th and 68th FIS's as they were assigned to the squadron for calibration and harmonization checks.

The first F-94B-1 s from the 339 to the 68th FIS were 51 -5349 and 5355 that were accepted by the 68th on October 10, 1951. The first of the twenty-seven F-94Bs assigned to the 4th FIS was 51-5359 that arrived at Naha Air Base , Okinawa on October 21.

The 339 FIS started a night gunnery program with their F-94s in January 1952. This was a part of the Far East Air Force's philosophy that the F-94 was a ground support fighter as well as an all-weather interceptor. In the following months not only would they be utilized for ground support but also night interdiction in conjunction with US Army training maneuvers in Japan. It may seem a non sequitur that an interceptor was utilized in this fashion, but it had been shown during World War II with P-61s, and early in the Korean War with F-82s, that the radar equipped fighters were highly effective as they sought out the enemy attempting to move under the cover of darkness. Here, though, there is an interesting point or question: Although the USAF Statistical Digest, Fiscal 1953, stated that the F-94s dropped 1,222 tons of bombs during the Korean War, there is absolutely no evidence available to substantiate the claim. For

almost a year after the F-94s were operational in Korea they were not even permitted to operate anywhere near the enemy ground forces. The 319th FIS historian railed against FEAF's restrictive policy of not permitting them to cross the Main Line of Resistance, MLR, even to attack a known enemy aircraft. When the restriction was lifted they became far too busy in their role as all-weather fighters to become involved with tactical ground support or interdiction work.

Since the air and ground crews of the 319th FIS were the most experienced in the type within the USAF, and the F-94s were all relatively new, having just been delivered from Lockheed between September and November 1951, the time to get them back into the air after their trans-Pacific journey was minimal. They were off-loaded at Yokohama, barged across the bay to the large Far East Air Material Command base at Kisarazu, where they were inspected for salt water corrosion, had their fuel and hydraulic systems purged and avionics checked, all of which averaged sixty man hours per aircraft, and then were flown to Johnson Air Base for final checks prior to the two-stop 830 mile trip to Suwon.

While this was going on, the 339 FIS assumed from the 68th FIS the commitment to defend Misawa, northern Honshu and the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. For this obligation they furnished six F-94s and six crews on a rotating basis from Johnson. The squadron strength was bolstered, too, at this point by the gain of four combat experienced pilots from the 68th's detachment in Korea. The squadron at this time had thirty-one pilots, twenty-one of which were combat ready. Sixteen radar observers, of which fourteen were combat ready.

Commencing on February 25 and running through February 28 the 339 FIS used seven F-94Bs from Johnson Air Base to conduct raids against their squadron members and other defenders at Misawa Air Base. The very last sortie was intercepted over the Initial Point by a single F-84 and once again the GCI site and Misawa's defenders came up short.

The 319th FIS became operational at Suwon on March 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 this assumption of duties, the 68th FIS was thereby relieved of its assignment to Korea, and along with the 339 FIS were now tasked with the protection of Japan. The 68th FIS would, however, remain on one-hour notice for possible combat duty in Korea as a reinforcement for the 319th FIS for the duration of the conflict.

As of March 1 the 319th FIS had twenty-six combat ready aircrews and twenty-five F-94s, while the 339 FIS had twenty-three F-94s and thirty-one assigned pilots and eighteen radar operators. The 68th FIS had nineteen F-94s, which included the first six of a shipment of brand new F-94B-5-LO's directly from Lockheed.

During the Spring of 1952 the 68th and 339 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.

In mid May 1954 the 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Suwon received Warning Orders that it was to be relieved from its semi-permanent attachment to the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing and would be returned to Japan and reassigned to its original parent 35th Fighter Interceptor wing. Effective July 15 the movement was accomplished with the squadron being moved to Chitose Air Base, Hokkaido, Japan. Five days later, on July 20, the squadron moved again, although this time only on paper. "Less Personnel & Equipment," the 39th FIS was transferred to Johnson Air Base. Simultaneously the "old" 339 FIS became the "new" 39th FIS at Johnson, while the "old" 39th FIS became the "new" 339 FIS at Misawa. The "new" 339 FIS now was a F-86 outfit, while the "new" 39th FIS was equipped with F-94s.

The United States Air Force listed that a total of six F-94 pilots were killed in action and six more remain Missing in Action. They do not carry a separate listing for radar observers, but one can assume that there were six in each category. One F-94 was claimed as lost to enemy action, and six more to non-enemy causes on a combat mission, along with two more that were declared missing on a combat mission. Three additional through accidents that occurred under more normal circumstances, although tabulation of the Individual Aircraft Record Cards indicate six in this category by the 319th FIS during the War, and two afterwards. Non committed units, the 4th, 68th and 339 FIS's lost a total of sixteen F-94s during the conflict and a half dozen prior to transitioning into F-86s a year and a half later. In all 34 FEAF F-94s are confirmed as being lost through one form of attrition or another.

The 339 Flight Test Squadron stationed at Robins Air Force Base has a new commander. During a change of command ceremony held at the Museum of Aviation, Lieutenant Colonel Dante Badia took over for outgoing Lieutenant Colonel John Nowak. Badia will now be in charge of the squadron whose main task is to perform flight test operations on various aircraft, including F-15s, C-130s, and C-5 cargo planes. The new squadron commander says he hopes to continue the long-standing tradition of the 339, "I hope to keep up with that great tradition. It goes all the way back to World War II, this squadron was the squadron that shot down Yamamoto's plane in the Pacific." Badia went on to praise his predecessor for doing a wonderful job in keeping with the 339's legacy. Lt. Col. Nowak has led the 339 since 2009. Lt. Col. Badia, an Air Force Academy graduate, is a seasoned pilot with more than 2600 flying hours, and has served as a mission commander in several military operations, including Operation Iraqi Freedom.

2013

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 1 Jan 2023
Updated:

Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.