

# 512<sup>th</sup> TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRON

## MISSION

### LINEAGE

628<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron (Dive) constituted, 4 Feb 1943  
Activated, 1 Mar 1943  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 10 Aug 1943  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 30 May 1944  
Inactivated, 20 Aug 1946  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 25 Jun 1952  
Activated, 10 Jul 1952  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1 Apr 1954  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Day Squadron, 8 Aug 1954  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 8 Sep 1955  
Inactivated, 1 Jul 1959  
Redesignated 512<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron  
Activated, 15 Nov 1976  
Inactivated

### STATIONS

Key Field, MS, 1 Mar 1943  
Congaree AAFld, SC, 18 Sep 1943-13 Mar 1944  
Ashford, England, 6 Apr 1944  
Tour-en-Bassin, France, 27 Jul 1944  
Cretteville, France, 17 Aug 1944  
St Leonard, France, 4 Sep 1944  
Mourmelon-le-Grand, France, c. 20 Sep 1949  
Metz, France, 31 Jan 1945  
Asch, Belgium, 8 Feb 1945  
Handorf, Germany, 15 Apr 1945  
Nordholz, Germany, c. 5 Jun 1945-20 Aug 1946  
Manston RAF Station England, 10 Jul 1952  
Soesterberg, Netherlands, 1 Nov 1954

Bentwaters RAF Station, England, 8 Sep 1955  
Sembach, Germany, 24 Mar 1958-1 Jul 1959

Ramstein AB, Germany, 15 Nov 1976

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

406<sup>th</sup> Bombardment (later Fighter Bomber; Fighter) Group, 1 Mar 1943-20 Aug 1946

406<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber (later Fighter Interceptor) Group, 10 Jul 1952

406<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Wing, 1 May 1956

86<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Wing, 24 Mar 1958-1 Jul 1959

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

A-20

A-24

A-25

A-26

A-35

A-36

UC-78

BC-1

P-39

P-40, 1943

P-47, 1943-1946

P-47G

P-39Q

P-47D

F-84, 1952-1953

F-86, 1953-1960

### **COMMANDERS**

#### **HONORS**

##### **Service Streamers**

American Theater

##### **Campaign Streamers**

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

France, 7 Sep 1944

Belgium, 23-27 Dec 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

31 Oct 1955-31 Oct 1958

Jul 1956-Feb 1958

## **EMBLEM**



A disc divided equally by a vertical arched line Air Force yellow and black, from a cloud formation proper, over the upper section of the disc, a green dragon, his head and neck moving over the arched division, with his head toward the base, breathing red flames of fire, his eyeballs white, his eyes black, with red pupils, all between two black silhouetted jet aircraft flying across the yellow area; and a white lightning bolt charging the black area. (Approved, 9 Sep 1955)

## **MOTTO**

VIGILARE PRO PACE, On Guard for Peace

## **NICKNAME**

Dragons

## **OPERATIONS**

Combat in ETO, 9 May 1944-6 May 1945.

On 16 November 1954 the 512th Fighter-Day Squadron moved from England to Soesterberg AB, Netherlands, the first time a US military unit had been stationed in that country during

Peacetime.

The 512 TFS at Ramstein AB West Germany officially became the first F-16 C and D unit in the US air forces in Europe in a ceremony held at the air base December 21, 1985. The event marked the beginning of the 86 TFW conversion from the F-4 aircraft to the F-16 and activation of the third F-16 site in USAFE. The 86 TFW is scheduled to complete the conversion to the F-16 late this year. As principal speaker at the event Brig. Gen. Cecil Powell commander of the 316 Air Division praised the operational record and the capability the F-16. The ceremony also marked the change of command of the 512 from Lieut. Col. Joseph H Wehrle Junior to Lieut. Col. Thomas O. Fleming Junior.

The "Pilots" is the word that enabled this book to be published and to which all our hearts are dedicated. It is a word that reaches back and claims every man who ever took a ship into the war clouded skies.

Many records, awards, and commendations have been made and earned by all personnel of the 512th, but records that were first of all attempted and strived for because their ultimate collective goal of success in the skies against the enemy they knew would be achieved by these pilots.

This confidence has been repaid in a blazing record that has created this way of saying thanks to them in pictures, to be printed and made a record on history's pages to their flying skill, their courage, and their complete devotion to duty.

It is felt that no other group of men could have made or has ever equaled the record of these pilots while flying the P-47 in the assignment of duty.

The functions of the squadron have been smoothly coordinated and ably directed by the Executive officer, Maj. WRIGHT; the Adjutant, Capt. GORTON, and the 1st Sgt. Felix B. SHAPIRO.

Major Thomas S. WRIGHT is a native of Iowa and served as an enlisted man in an artillery outfit. As Executive he had the responsibility of preparing the squadron to go overseas and in the ETO he functioned as an administrative inspector of the various sections.

Captain William R. GORTON is from Liberty, New York. Originally the squadron supply officer, Capt. Gorton has had charge of all personnel problems in the squadron as Adjutant as well as supervisor of the Mess.

1st Sgt. Felix B. SHAPIRO is from Atlanta, Georgia and very proud of it. Lucky is the squadron with a good 1st Sgt. And lucky is the 512th in its 1st Sgt. Understanding and able, his competent supervision of the Squadron Headquarters and his able representation of the enlisted men is highly appreciated.

John M. DURAN, mail clerk, known as "Muscles" to his unlimited number of friends. By his

willingness to do his job well, Muscles, in his own inimitable manner is a large contributing factor to the morale of the Squadron. However, the very fact of his jolly disposition belies the nickname of "Muscles."

Jim "Army Regulations" NEWMAN, head of the Unit Personnel Section not only has to "Keep Em Paid" but cares for the intricate records of each individual in, or attached to, this organization. His unswerving devotion to duty, coupled with his loyalty and long hours of work has earned for this Squadron the enviable record of having the best Unit Personnel Section in the ETO.

Frank FAHNESTOCK, "Nimble Fingers Frankie" has contributed largely to the success of the Unit Personnel section. It is quite a treat to hear "Nimble Fingers" beat out a tattoo on the typewriter. If the army red tape has got you, and you're in doubt, see "Pop."

Walter R. MARTENS—two hundred and fifty men, representing 43 states, could not escape the mighty pen of "Duty Roster" Martens. His unbiased selections of KP's, work details, and Guards, kept to a minimum the usual gripes that accompanies this job.

Robert H. CORNELL, our highly competent statistician—275, who dotes on classification and assignment; his audit list is truly a work of art. His easygoing ways and unruffled disposition have just earned him the nickname of "Nonchalant Bob."

Irving J. CONWAY—by long and arduous work, together with his tireless efforts to attain perfection, has developed into a master in the art of "policing up."

INTELLIGENCE: S-2 with its intelligence, censorship, maps, training, legal procedures, orientation, drafting, and program of helping the pilots in every possible way has set a fine record within the 512th Fighter Squadron.

Norman "Spearhead" GALLAGHER as NCO section head, coordinated the activities of Martin R. LAATSCH, draftsman, and "Hy" COHEN, intelligence specialist, who was well known for his industry and willingness to please.

"Get Those Doughnuts" COHEN, as he was jokingly referred to by some, hails from Houston, Texas, the state to which the other 47 are attached for quarters and rations, as Hy would say. "Pete" LAATSCH comes from Gleason, Wisc. and claims that Chicago and the beer from his home state are tops. "Norm" Gallagher is one of those 100% Californians who think that the Golden State has everything from liquid sunshine to the best oranges.

OPERATIONS: Captain William ANDERSON, Jr., of Garrison, Montana, our Operations Officer and Captain J.C. BROWN of Birmingham, Ala., Asst. Operations Officer, are two of the few pilots who left the States with the Squadron and have been with us all through England, France, Belgium, and Germany. "Andy" and "Brownie" reflect the fine type of spirit and work that has made this Squadron one of the best. They have both accounted for the destruction of many enemy trains, tanks, trucks, ammo dumps, flak guns, etc., and "Andy" is the leading man in the

Squadron on number of enemy planes shot down. Both wear the Air Medal with many clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Robert (Bob) TEAGUE, Delmar BEERWORTH, and Herbert (Smitty) SMITH, the enlisted men of the section, say that all the confusion in the Squadron caused by changes in loads, changes in lanes, loading of tanks then unloading them, etc., is blamed on them, and although they aren't responsible, they are thankful to Bell for the invention of the telephone, for they feel they would hardly have escaped with their scalps if they would have had to deliver the messages in person.

The fellows, even when working under field conditions, with packing cases for desks and a beat-up typewriter, that looks as though it came off the ark, have always managed to keep a very efficient section. Their duties consist of keeping records of flying time, combat time, sortie credits, missions, etc., not to mention the making of Operations Orders, mission reports, and numerous other reports. Just to add to the confusion the telephones are always ringing with questions of who is flying? What is flying? When? Where? etc., and there are always flight schedules and last minute changes in schedules or loads to the line or flying control. All in all the boys never have a dull moment, but they say that it's very interesting to be right in the thick of the excitement, knowing what is going on at all times.

At first the work ranged from changing mags and checking cameras on the line to reloading mags and repairing cameras in the laboratory. But with the addition of two men, the processing of squadron film and projection of shows for special service were added to the daily tasks. Ex-watchmaker Joe GRANDLICH of Milwaukee, Wisc. Joined the section before leaving Ashford and in addition to photo work he kept the squadron watches in running condition. Early in France the last man joined the section—Dave CHAMBERLIN (good naturedly known as the "Mad Genius" for his unconventional gadgets) from Duck Creek, Montana. Yes, Montana is our ally.

We all hated to lave jolly ol' England—especially Bird who left something behind in Canterbury, and Chamberlain, who was just getting "lined up" in London. Well, France had a lot to offer.

We had always considered ourselves the superior photo section. Undoubtedly being under the supervision of Lt. Jack ROBINSON, who hails from Texas, was a deciding factor.

With the arrival of VE Day, training missions using just the cameras, and work for the squadron found us doing as much as ever. Would we ever get a break? Well, "C'est la Guerre."

Another day has gone by and CWS has had a rough time of it. Boy, these G.I. costs are terrible! Okay, we will be frank with you. We did get plenty of rest—after we did a fair share of the squadron work. Shreve and Farnolo kept you supplied with improvised showers while better facilities were lacking and did plenty of vehicle washing with the Decontamination truck. Remember the gas chamber at A-80 where we made sure that your gas mask would save you during a gas attack? Shreve and Farnolo stood in that chamber all day long with that awful tear gas and Adamsite attacking their skin. That's why CWS couldn't shave for a whole week. Yes, we

even put up a few hundred gas alarms and detector boards.

Now may the good Lord reward the chemical section for its wonderful work—the two section men would make excellent civilians.

COMMUNICATIONS: The radio "queers" under the excellent supervision of Lt. Paul Ohls kept the lines of communications rolling while Kay headed the "queers" through their daily gripes and groans. Flt. Chiefs Widener, Mixson, Schroeder, and Towler kept their flights in order while Inspector Hodges chased around checking to see if the boys had completed their modifications. If you strolled into the "shack" you would find Deiterich working at his bench, chasing ohms and gremlins through the radios. Not to forget Rusch keeping his homing pigeons in tow.

Whether it be fair weather or foul, communications had to go on as one of those rarely mentioned services that played an important part in our great combat team. "Basher from 457 for a check, Over!" "Roger, loud and clear" was a very familiar sound from the radio shack as the boys checked their ships. Then if you were turned in on our frequency, you would probably hear, "steer 360" coming from our very efficient homing boys as they shouldered the heavy responsibility of bringing our pilots home safely.

If you happened to be around Group in the wee hours of the morning, you would undoubtedly have found our boys hard at work banging out on the teletype or on the "key", letting the officials know that the Basher men scored again. Or "stardust here, are you finished? I'll ring them again." Wishing they could tell them to make up their damn mind. This is just a part of the unsung heroes that never got enough credit, but worked all hours as they did their part in the big effort.

ORDNANCE: Chow! Chow! Echoes thru the hall, as the sun hits the horizon and (Black Boy) Christy Greece, our section chief, is politely trying to awaken his superb, hard-working, back-breaking ordnance bunch. The secret to his ability of awakening early is attributed to (G.I.) (Early Bird) Wilson, who rises before the C.W. Then comes the mad rush to eat. Usually one or two manage to make it. (Mad Russian) Lou Preslopsky of Brass City and (Speedy) Lou Riddell everlastingly make the chow line, which is more than can be said for the rest of us meatballs. Our one and only (Sack Man) El Umbenauer, if by some chance should get a furlough, well, that might eventually lead to his eating breakfast for the first time since his arriving in the E.T.O. Anyway that's enough on the chow subject.

Next comes the pre-fighting of our trucks, which are voluntarily done by (Stick Time) (The Kid) Stichenoth and (Old Bean) Wilmer R. Tilbury, who keep blowing the horns with the idea of persuading us to go to the line. Naturally, that's very silly, but as the hours pass the bunch finally show up for work. Once there, it's the same old story with (Bull) (Gin Hound) Sondecker and (Slick) (Never Wrong) Honig starting their crying and moaning of how much there is to be done. Everyone is accustomed to that so Steve (fingers) Twardosz tries taking some guns apart without dropping the parts or the guns. Our bookkeeper (Bird Brain) Dan Meager tries once again to take inventory on the bombs and fuses, but as usual the count is wrong. Last, but not

least, our mechanic Wilbur (Never Grind The Clutch) Lonergan sort of suggests lunch and before you know it the trucks are all off again with Black Boy bellowing Chow! Chow!

TECH SUPPLY: Here are the boys who exploited to the fullest extent the use of the well known phrase "Not in stock." In fact, we sometimes think that they are the guys who made the phrase well known. Perhaps there's room for debate there because, seriously, they comprise a smooth, efficiently operating section whose duty is to obtain and keep on hand spare parts and equipment required to "Keep 'Em Flying."

Lt. Hand is the section officer and has done a swell job of keeping the boys "on the ball." He hails from—I hate to do this to anyone—Mississippi, and what's more he is proud of it. "Mac" McCloud, an "Okie," is the "little wheel" and has become the bookworm of the section by keeping up the property accounting, publications files, and various other things—such as those unpopular "statements of charges." Harold Busbee, commonly known as "Buzz," and one of the two Texans of the section, is the spare parts specialist; and in spite of his casual, quiet manner, he rates second to no one in that capacity. K.W. Cooper, who lived in Indiana, and Joe L. Cooper, the other Texas, are the "Bolt & Nut" boys—they also handle several hundred other items. They're the guys who have a "million bolts" but not one that will fit. Joe "Charley" Hartshorn, the Kansas Duststorm, is the jack of all trades, capably performing any and all tasks. The two trailers in which Tech Supply is now set up is a reflection of his abilities.

The fact that these guys are not "all smiles" when confronted with requests for items of supply is not a true indication of enthusiasm for their work. They wouldn't trade jobs with anyone in the outfit; and that's what it takes to make a good section in a good outfit.

PARACHUTE: In the Parachute and Personnel Equipment Section of the 512th, Ftr. Sq., we found Lt. William W. Ziegler from Pacific Grove, Calif., as the officer in charge. Ben W. Payne from Memphis, Tenn. And Ralph C. McCartney from Grafton, West Virginia, the enlisted men, were very capable assistants and saw that regular inspections and repacks of the "great white umbrellas" were maintained and also aided in the task of keeping the pilots fitted with flying equipment.

The old saying went, "If your parachute doesn't work, bring it back and we will give you a new one," guaranteed by L. Ziegler. Well that never happened to us but we had some satisfied customers and it was principally due to the good work of Ben Payne and Ralph McCartney, who have fitted parachutes from Congaree, S.C. to Handorf, Germany. Of course some of our customers weren't so happy when they hit the ground. There was Lt. Col. Locke, who bailed out and had to dodge the Jerries for a few days and finally returned to our organization. Then "Chief" Underwood, who bailed out and was taken prisoner, but escaped four days later. Of course none of us will forget "Lucky" Lief Johansen who was compelled to hit the silk twice. Once he spent 17 hours in the English Channel and the second time he bailed out in enemy territory, was taken prisoner and has been prisoner ever since. At least 18 lives have been saved by parachute jumps in this organization and that certainly is worth a lot.



We enjoyed working with the "heroes of the skies" and with their job well done, we were greatly satisfied.

LYING CONTROL: Routine duties of the unit has been the logging of aircraft in and out, seeing that the runway was kept in condition, seeing that the flare path was laid out and operating each night, keeping up on information concerning other fields, navigation hazards and aids, and similar duties.

The unexpected happenings included the Airfield Controllers (the men at the end of the runway) hitting the dirt as a plane coming in for a landing passed too close overhead; or the Tower personnel becoming prematurely grey as a "Buzz-Bomb" passed close to the Tower; or a plane blowing up on the runway; or a bomb or rocket dropping on the runway—memories of sweating in shot up fighters or bombers onto the runway (sometimes not too successfully)—watching planes mushing in or belly landing beside the strip.

The unit lost one man who was injured by a fragment when a bomb accidentally exploded near the Tower. During overseas operations, three different Towers were constructed by the method of the "field expedient"—the last one being considered the best mobile Tower in the ETO.

FINANCE: One of the attached units to the 512th Squadron—Finance, represents a unit which is probably most popular in any field of service. Once a month we looked forward expectantly to that day of all days—pay day, which started a new series of card games and crap games, and enabled the men once more to visit the neighboring towns in quest of perfume, cognac, or entertainment.

This Finance Section was organized from personnel drawn from the Ninth Air Force Finance Detachment at large. Due to the faithful cooperation among members of this section, each individual recognizes in every other member, a friend to be long remembered. Although payrolls were computed under the Buzz-bombs of Ashford, in the apple orchards of Normandy, and in the Champagne region of France, the section lived up to the old Finance Motto—"Get 'Em Paid."

LIFE IN THE SQUADRON: We have come a long way since the "Sterling Castle" docked at Liverpool, England and we entrained overnight to Ashford, Kent in Southern England in April 1944.

Our first homes were tents, the six-man kind, into which seven were sandwiched. The outsides were decorated with foxholes which became popular with the introduction of the "doodle bugs."

Day began with chow at 6:30 or earlier if missions were pre-scheduled and frequently ended

long after dark. Then the lights came out to paint the skies and the night fighters took up their vigilance of the heavens.

Daily routines were much the same, whether in the cow pastures of Southern England, the orchards of Normandy, France, or the village of Handorf, Germany.

Engineers took off before many of us were awake to pre-flight their ships. Long lines, no matter what meal of the day, were a constant plague and we'd invariably find ourselves in one—if not to eat, then to get paid, draw something from supply, or have a gun inspected.

Numerous duties aside from the routine found men putting up tents, digging latrines, building huts in Belgium, policing the area, and in other ways converting pastures, orchards, and woods into small thriving communities.

Many times "Pup" tents were the vogue, then the "air echelon" would take off in quest of new fields. Bees attacked and counter-attacked the marmalade supply at Loupeland. "Andy" offered no end of amusement to all who had time to play with him and the addition of "Susie" at A-13 paid off with a litter at Handorf, with long black ears—how about that "Thunder"?

Movies played nightly and a USO show always proved to be cause for excitement. Even during the day the Red Cross occasionally put in a much welcomed appearance with coffee and doughnuts. The NAAFI in England also did a large crumpet and tea business.

Jackson Kyes and his band made a big hit at the "club" where things happened often till the wee hours of the morning.

And when daily duties were accomplished, many of us found friends and companionship in the neighboring villages and towns wherever we were stationed.

This was life in the squadron, which brought us together each day in a manner that produced an organization whose efficiency could not be challenged.