

# 1<sup>st</sup> HELICOPTER SQUADRON



## LINEAGE

1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Reconnaissance Squadron constituted, 11 Apr 1944

Activated, 20 Apr 1944

Redesignated 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron, Commando, 2 Jun 1944

Inactivated, 12 Nov 1945

Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

1st Helicopter Squadron constituted, 9 May 1969

Activated, 1 Jul 1969

1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron, Commando reconstituted and consolidated with the 1<sup>st</sup> Helicopter Squadron, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron retains 1<sup>st</sup> Helicopter Squadron designation.

## STATIONS

Lakeland AAFld, FL, 20 Apr 1944

Cross City AAFld, FL, 12 Jun 1944

Alachua AAFld, FL, 21 Jun 1944

Drew Field, FL, 17 Aug 1944

Lakeland AAFld, FL, 22 Aug–23 Oct 1944

Kalaikunda, India, 14 Dec 1944

Cox's Bazaar, India, 13 Feb 1945

Kalaikunda, India, 10 May–22 Oct 1945

Camp Kilmer, NJ, 11–12 Nov 1945

Andrews AFB, MD, 1 Jul 1969

## ASSIGNMENTS

Third Air Force, 20 Apr 1944

2<sup>nd</sup> Air Commando Group, 22 Apr 1944–12 Nov 1945

1<sup>st</sup> Composite Wing, 1 Jul 1969

89<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Wing, Special Mission (later, 89<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Group

89<sup>th</sup> Military Airlift Wing), 1 Jul 1976

89<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 12 Jul 1991

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-51A, 1944

P-51C

P-51D

F-6D, 1945

CH-21, 1969

TH-1, 1969

UH-1, 1969

CH-3, 1970

VH-1N

### **ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS**

F-6D

44-15664

P-51A

43-6036

P-51C

42-103739

42-103821

42-103831

42-103818

42-103808

42-103814

P-51D

44-15400

44-15272

44-14942

UC-64

43-35353

VH-1N

96655

### **ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES**

## **UNIT COLORS**

### **COMMANDERS**

LTC William E. Buxton

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

None

#### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Central Burma

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation

Bangkok, Thailand, 15 Mar 1945

#### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards**

1 Jul 1976–31 Jan 1977

1 Jul 1987–30 Jun 1989

1 Jul 1989–30 Jun 1991

1 Jul 1991–30 Jun 1992

### **EMBLEM**

On a Blue disc edged Yellow within a pattern of five Yellow stars forming a pentagon the White silhouette of the Washington Monument rising from a Green mound in base, the Monument surmounted by a Gray silhouetted helicopter fesswise. (Approved, 25 Feb 1970)

### **MOTTO**

FIRST AND FOREMOST

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

The Second Air Commando Group was activated April 22, 1944 by special orders issued by Air Force General H.H. "Hap" Arnold. Colonel Arthur R. DeBolt was Appointed Commanding Officer. Colonel DeBolt was given unlimited choice to select and obtain personnel and equipment to formulate his group. Needed were two fighter squadrons to fly P-51s. Each of these squadrons had an attached Airdrome Squadron to do maintenance, construct living and eating facilities, establish a motor pool, and guard duty, construct air strips, and any other assignment needed to assist the fighting squadrons in the air.

Two excellent experienced fighter squadrons from Panama were absorbed - pilots, crew chiefs, armament men, communications personnel, supply. To these were added two aerial photography sections and a few fighter pilots with combat experience in China and/or Burma. Thus the origin of the First and Second Fighter Squadrons.

Most of the Second Air Commando Group arrived at Kalaikunda, India, ninety miles west of Calcutta, in Bengal Province. December 11, 1944. This airbase had been built for heavy bombers. In fact, some of the first B-29s were stationed here. The runway undulated down the old basalt countryside for 10,000 feet. The airplane parking area was long and about 200 yards across and had at least a five foot crown in the center. Since our arrival preceded our planes and equipment there was little to do. We were soon greeted to the CBI by our British allies when Spitfires and Hurricanes buzzed us unmercifully day after day, even flying between buildings on the line. This continued to the point where everyone could hardly wait for our P-51s to arrive so that return visits could be made in kind.

At last in January our P-51s arrived, but each one had to be closely checked and control cables adjusted. As we suffered the British displays, the word in the First Fighter Squadron was, "Wait until Tyson shows these guys how to fly." Capt. Tom Tyson was known as a "pilots' pilot". He not only knew all phases of flying but worked closely with our engineering section on mechanical problems.

At last, the great day came. The word was out. The first plane was ready and "Tyson, Tyson, he's our man" was going to test fly it. Our engineering officer, Captain Don Branyon, asked that the plane be flown fairly low along the flight line so he could visually check the position of the air scoop under the P-51D. The crowd gathered. The anticipation was great and finally the plane was taxied to the runway and took off. It seemed "our man" did everything possible a human could do with this plane - a beautiful exhibition of flying with the man and the airplane melded to execute perfection. Now for the visual examination of the air scoop! Between five and ten thousand feet altitude when he put his plane into a vertical dive. Down it came! Closer and closer to the ground until it appeared it had to crash. With extraordinary skill the plane was brought out of the dive and up the parking area so fast that it could not be heard. Its prop was not more than three feet above the concrete. The tension in the crowd was electrifying. When Tyson's dive started, unnoticed by all, two very short Gurkha soldiers started to walk across the parking area for guard duty on the other side. Because of the crowd, they were not aware that a plane was coming at them three feet above the runway at great speed. As the elements in this tragedy converged, one Gurkha instinctively fell to the ground. The second Gurkha faced the airplane and threw up one arm. One blade of the propeller severed the arm - the second blade sliced through the man's head just in front of his ears. The airplane was immediately pulled up, and unfortunately again, a huge Indian vulture hit the wing just outside of the propeller making quite a hole in the leading edge of the wing. All of us who witnessed the events of this day will never forget the superb exhibition of flying we saw and the tragic finale. Capt. Tyson was transferred out of our group as a result of an investigation, but to every man of the First Fighter Squadron, Tyson was always: "our man". There was none finer.

The 1st Fighter Squadrons entered into action on February 14, 1945 in support of the 14th Army's drive on Meiktila.

The Fighter pilots of the 2nd Air Commando Group had not come to South East Asia just to burn bashes; and so the 1st and 2nd Fighter Squadrons ranged farther and farther afield in search of the Nip Air Force. On March 15, 1945 Chase's Circus finally found the Oscars and Dinahs, the Tonys and Bettys hidden deep in the heart of Siam. When 40 Commando P-51s struck Don Muang Air Field near Bangkok at high noon they found that the Japanese had concentrated well over a hundred planes on the field. Buildings, planes, Japs, rice and sake went with the wind as the Mustangs made pass after pass.

In addition to counter air force strikes, the 1st and 2nd Squadrons escorted Strategic Air Force bombers on missions to Rangoon, Moulmein, Bangkok, etc., engaged in extensive bridge busting on the route from Meiktila to Rangoon, and made life miserable for the Japs engaged in motor, rail, and river transport all over South Burma. The last straw for the Japs was the successful Commando attack east of Pegu on 29 April 1945 where the Japs had concentrated all their remaining equipment for the trek to Moulmein. The P-51s not only destroyed tankettes, trains, locomotives, AA guns, cars and trucks, but blew up the Japs only fuel dump. When the British ground troops arrived the next day they found hundreds of vehicles abandoned and the Japs dispersed.

With the advent of the monsoon, the Fighter Squadrons were providing routine fighter cover to the amphibious forces which took Rangoon on May 4, 1945, without a struggle.

Incidental to the most spectacular enemy game bag in the Burma Campaign was the fact that the squadron set a new distance record for a single-engine fighter sweep in World War II. From Cox's Bazar to Don Muang was over 1,600 miles as flown. Congratulations poured in, "Air Marshal Sir Keith Park asks that his congratulations for the spectacularly successfully executed raid on enemy air forces at Bangkok be extended to Second Air Commando Group." "Please convey my heartiest congratulations to Nos. 1 and 2 U.S. Squadrons of 2nd Air Commando Group on their magnificent attack on Don Muang Airfield Bangkok. Apart from highly successful results which were achieved, the round trip from Cox's Bazar to Bangkok involving some 1,600 miles representing 8 or 9 hours. This remarkable achievement carried out by single seater aircraft reflects most favorably on 2nd Air Commandos as a whole and in particular on high standard of training and determination of pilots concerned." Please extend my personal congratulations and commendation to the men of the Second Air Commando Group for their part in destroying four enemy aircraft in the air, sixteen on the ground and damaging eighteen others, "while suffering the loss of only one of our own.

Without taking a breather the fighters returned again and again to Siam; striking such strategic fields as Ban-Takli, Chiangmai, Koke Katheim, Khoga, Nakorn Pathon, Nakorn Sawan, and Phre.

The 1st HS operates 17 UH-1N. From 1969, provided local airlift for the Executive Department, high-ranking dignitaries, and distinguished visitors; support for emergency evacuation of key government officials; search and rescue; and emergency medical evacuation. In addition, they also support the national search and rescue plan and are responsive to military and civilian emergency medical evacuation request.

On 1 July 1976, the 89th MAW picked up the 1st Helicopter Squadron, a 156 -man unit. There were 10 UH-1Ns and four CH-3Es, all assigned to Andrews AFB, Maryland.

28 Sep 1987, marked the end of another flying era for the 1st Helicopter Squadron, when the unit's four CH-3E took off in unison for their last flight together. Maintenance and aircrews watched as the four helicopters flew by and peeled off one at a time before landing and taking their final bow. The first CH-3E arrived 17 years ago at Andrews AFB to replace the then-aging CH-21. To replace the aging CH-3Es, the squadron gained 13 UH-1Ns. Along with the UH-1Ns came 98 additional people to fly and maintain them. The unit had 199 people assigned, when the phase-in period was over. The first CH-3E left on 3 Oct 1987, the last two left in Dec 1987 and Jan 1988.

A UH-1N Huey assigned to the 1st Helicopter Squadron at JB Andrews, Md., made a precautionary landing on a field next to William Ramsay Elementary School in Alexandria, Va., just before 11 a.m. Thursday. The aircraft landed safely and all seven personnel on board were uninjured. "Following the illumination of a transmission warning light, standard operations and training call for rotary wing crews to 'land now and investigate later,' in response to situations that may prove to be serious," said Lt. Col. Scott Yeatman, 811th Operations Group deputy commander, in an April 30 release. "This crew's timely and appropriate response assured no damage to aircraft, personnel, or property." According to Alexandria Schools Twitter page, a physical education class went out to look at the aircraft and got a "spontaneous lesson" from the crew. Air Force maintenance crews arrived on scene to assess the situation and the helicopter was back in the air just after 2 p.m., according to the Alexandria Police Department's Twitter page. The 1st Helicopter Squadron is tasked with providing airlift to White House, cabinet, congressional, and Defense Department leadership following a national security incident. 2015

Leaders turned the first shovel on the construction of a \$22 million helicopter operations facility at JB Andrews, Md., Nov. 2. The building will bring the 1st Helicopter Squadron and the 811th Operations Support Squadron, both based at Andrews, under the same roof. "This project will make our airmen more efficient at a job they already excel at," 11th Wing Commander Col. Brad Hoagland. "Pooling all of our resources and personnel for the 811th [Operations Group] just makes sense," he added. The future two-story, 66,000 square-foot facility will include combined administrative offices, planning and briefing rooms, flight simulators, a fitness center, and other amenities, stated building contractor Haskell. Construction was slated to begin earlier this summer and wrap up at the end of 2016. The 1st HS, which is primarily tasked with executive airlift in and around the National Capital Region, flies the UH-1N helicopter. 2015

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Air Force Order of Battle  
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#### Sources

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