

## 31 TACTICAL TRAINING SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

31 Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 22 Dec 1939  
Activated, 1 Feb 1940  
Redesignated 31 Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942  
Inactivated, 25 May 1944  
Activated, 19 Aug 1944  
Inactivated, 3 Jul 1946  
Redesignated 31 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 11 Feb 1953  
Activated, 20 Apr 1953  
Inactivated, 18 Aug 1955  
Activated, 8 Jun 1956  
Inactivated, 8 Oct 1958  
Redesignated 31 Tactical Reconnaissance Training Squadron, 18 Aug 1969  
Organized, 15 Oct 1969  
Inactivated, 18 Feb 1971  
Redesignated 31 Tactical Training Squadron, 20 Apr 1982  
Activated, 1 May 1982  
Inactivated, 9 May 1988

#### STATIONS

Albrook Field, CZ, 1 Feb 1940  
Rio Hato, Panama, 5 Oct 1940  
Albrook Field, CZ, 13 Nov 1940  
Chorrera, Panama, 9 Dec 1941

Albrook Field, CZ, 23 Dec 1941  
Chorrera, Panama, 3 Feb 1942  
Albrook Field, CZ, 19 May 1942  
Howard Field, CZ, 30 Sep 1942-25 Mar 1944  
Lincoln AAFld, NE, 8 Apr-25 May 1944  
Palmdale AAFld, CA, 19 Aug 1944  
Santa Maria AAFld, CA, 10 Jul 1945  
March Field, CA, 6 Dec 1945-3 Jul 1946  
Larson AFB, WA, 20 Apr 1953-18 Aug 1955  
Wurtsmith AFB, MI, 8 Jun 1956  
Elmendorf AFB, AK, 20 Aug 1957-8 Oct 1958  
Shaw AFB, SC, 16 Oct 1969 – 18 Feb 1971  
Homestead AFB, FL, 1 May 1982 – 9 May 1988

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

37 Pursuit (later Fighter) Group, 1 Feb 1940  
XXVI Fighter Command, 1 Nov 1943  
Second Air Force, 8 Apr-25 May 1944  
412 Fighter Group, 19 Aug 1944-3 Jul 1946  
4702 Defense Wing, 20 Apr 1953  
9 Air Division, 8 Oct 1954-18 Aug 1955  
412 Fighter Group, 8 Jun 1956  
10 Air Division, 20 Aug 1957-8 Oct 1958  
363 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 16 Oct 1969 – 18 Feb 1971  
31 Tactical Training Wing (later 31 Tactical Fighter Wing), 1 May 1982 – 9 May 1988

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-26, 1940-1942  
P-40, 1941  
P-39, 1942  
A-25, 1944  
P-38G, 1944  
A-24, 1944-1945  
P-63A, 1944-194  
YP/P-59, 1944-1945  
XP-80, 1944-1945  
P-51, 1945-1946  
P-80, 1945-1946  
F-86, 1953-195  
F-102, 1956-1958  
RF-4, 1969-1971

### **COMMANDERS**

1<sup>st</sup> Lt John R. Kelly, 1 Feb 1940-Jun 1940

Lt Col R. O. Heatly, #1954

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

American Theater

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**



31 Fighter Squadron emblem: A caricatured brown fox, standing on a small white cloud formation, outlined light blue, wearing red trousers, yellow vest, black and gray full dress coat, blue muffler about the neck, marked with three light blue stars, and yellow goggles, lenses light blue; one eye closed and the other sighted down barrel of blue revolver with cork in muzzle, held in left forepaw. (Approved, 24 Aug 1943.)

Occupying an important and enviable station with the United Nations armed forces, the ships of the 31 Pursuit Squadron patrol the skies over the Canal Zone, carrying the insignia of the Disneyesque fox in the stance of the sly strategist about to engage in a duel on the field of honor. This time the order of the "Little Fox" of ballad fame is reversed; he is the pursuer, of crafty and conniving propensity, so much in the everyday makeup of the personnel of pursuing and fighting units.



31 Fighter Interceptor Squadron emblem



31 Tactical Reconnaissance Training squadron emblem



31 Tactical Training Squadron emblem (Approved, Sep 1986)

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

It became a training unit in 1969, first training tactical reconnaissance aircrews on the McDonnell RF-4C Phantom II from 1969 to 1971 as the '31 Tactical Reconnaissance Training Squadron, then acting as the "schoolhouse" for F-4 aircrews from 1982 to 1988.

The squadron was constituted in 1939 as the 31 Pursuit Squadron and activated on 1 February 1940 at Albrook Field, Panama Canal Zone as one of the original squadrons of the 37th Pursuit Group. The unit was part of the build-up of the Canal Zone's defenses as war approached. It was initially equipped with a mixture of second-line pursuit aircraft, including Boeing P-26A Peashooters, Northrup A-17 Nomads, and some North American BC-1s. The mission of the squadron was air defense of the Panama Canal. In July 1941, the Squadron started re-equipping with new Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. The Squadron was briefly moved to Rio Hato Field on 5 October 1940 and, following a month there, returned to Albrook on 13 November, where it remained until 24 November 1941.

After the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor, the Squadron was moved to La Chorrera Army Airfield where it shared the field with the 30th Pursuit Squadron. The unit operated as an element of the Panama Interceptor Command. On 15 May 1942, the squadron's designation was changed to 31 Fighter Squadron. In September 1942, the unit moved from Albrook to Howard Field and started to convert to Bell P-39 Airacobras. In December, "E" Flight was moved to San Jose Airport, Costa Rica where it was almost immediately reassigned to the 53d Fighter Squadron.

The unit served out the remainder of its Panama tour at several airfields until April 1944, and was moved to the United States as Sixth Air Force eliminated or transferred combat units in

view of the reduced threat to the Panama Canal and Caribbean. The squadron was to become a single-engine fighter Replacement Training Unit for Second Air Force at Lincoln Army Airfield, Nebraska, but it was inactivated seven weeks after it arrived at Lincoln.

The squadron was activated once again as part of the 412th Fighter Group, which was located at Muroc Army Airfield, California in August 1944. It became a testing unit for the Bell P-59 Airacomet and Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star jet aircraft under Fourth Air Force. The squadron served in a training role for transitioning pilots from piston-engine to jet engine fighters. The squadron provided Army Air Forces pilots and ground crews with valuable data about the difficulties and pitfalls involved in converting to jet aircraft. This information proved quite useful when more advanced jet fighters finally became available in quantity. The squadron was inactivated in July 1946 and its mission, personnel, and equipment were transferred to the 71st Fighter Squadron as the AAF replaced the 412th with the 1st Fighter Group.

The squadron was reactivated as the 31 Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, an element Air Defense Command at Larson Air Force Base, Washington in early 1953 and assigned to the 4702d Defense Wing. At Larson the squadron was equipped with Mighty Mouse rocket armed and airborne intercept radar equipped North American F-86D Sabre interceptors. The squadron was engaged in the air defense of the Pacific Northwest. In the summer of 1955 ADC implemented Project Arrow, which was designed to bring back on the active list the fighter units which had compiled memorable records in the two world wars and associate them with their traditional headquarters. As a result, the mission, personnel and equipment of the 31 were transferred to the 322d Fighter-Interceptor Squadron IAW ADC "Project Arrow".

The squadron was again reactivated in 1956 at Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan and equipped with supersonic Convair F-102 Delta Daggers armed with the AIM-4 Falcon missile. The following year it moved to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska Territory where it performed intercepts of intruding aircraft as part of Alaskan Air Command, arriving in Alaska. The squadron was inactivated in October 1958 and its aircraft were reassigned to the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron.

The 31 was redesignated as the 31 Tactical Reconnaissance Training Squadron and reactivated under Tactical Air Command (TAC) at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina in 1969, where it assumed the mission, personnel and equipment of 4414th Combat Crew Training Squadron, which was discontinued. This was part of TAC's program to replace its Major Command controlled (MAJCON) units with USAF controlled (AFCON) units that were able to carry a permanent lineage and history. The squadron conducted RF-4C Phantom II training for tactical reconnaissance aircrews. The squadron was inactivated in 1971 due to reduced training requirements, and its aircraft assigned to the 33d Tactical Reconnaissance Training Squadron.

In 1982, the squadron became the 31 Tactical Training Squadron and was activated at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida. In 1988, the 31 Tactical Fighter Wing's mission switched from training to readiness as a fighter unit and the squadron was inactivated.

On 19 May 1942, 1LT Bernard D. Donis went missing on a flight near Rio Sajaliskas, Panama. He was never found.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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#### Sources

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Unit yearbook. *25<sup>th</sup> Air Division (Defense). 1953-1954.*

Unit yearbook. *Larson AFB, WA, 62 Troop Carrier Wing, 1953.* Army and Navy Publishing Company. Baton Rouge, LA. 1953.

*War Insignia Stamp Album, Vol. 2,* Postamp Publishing Co., 1942.