

54th Fighter Group



Col James R. Keen

Lineage.

Established as 54th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) on 20 November 1940.

Activated on 15 January 1941.¹

Redesignated 54th Fighter Group on 15 May 1942.

Disbanded on 1 May 1944.

Reconstituted and redesignated as 54th Fighter Group (Air Defense), on 20 June 1955.

Activated on 18 August 1955.

Inactivated on 8 January 1958. 3

Redesignated as 54th Fighter Group on 20 February 2014.²

Activated on 1 March 2014.³

Honors.

Service Streamers.

World War II American Theater

Decorations.

Distinguished Unit Citations

Aleutian Islands, 27 May-4 November 1942⁴

¹ War Department Adjutant General Letter 320.2 (10-17-40) dated 20 November 1940.

² DAF Ltr 481t, 20 February 2014

³ AETC SO G-14-8, 21 February 2014

⁴ GO No. 44, HQ, XI AF, 2 Dec 1942.

Decorations. (Continued)

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award:

11 March 2014-30 June 2014⁵

1 July 2014-30 June 2015⁶

1 July 2015-30 June 2016⁷

Group – 10 Total Aerial Victory Credits.⁸ Group Aces: None.

PAST AND PRESENT UNITS ASSIGNED

Currently Assigned Units	Time Frame Assigned
Groups	
Squadrons	
54th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron	1 March 2014 ⁹
54th Maintenance Squadron	1 March 2014 ¹⁰
54th Operations Support Squadron	1 March 2014 ¹¹
8th Fighter Squadron	4 August 2017 ¹²
311th Fighter Squadron	1 March 2014 ¹³
314 Fighter Squadron	6 July 2015 ¹⁴

Previously Assigned Units	Time Frame Assigned
Squadrons	
42d Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) later, 42d Fighter Squadron	15 January 1941-1 May 1944; 18 August 1955-8 January 1958
56th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) later, 56th Fighter Squadron	15 January 1941-1 May 1944
57th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) later, 57th Fighter Squadron	15 January 1941-1 May 1944

Assignments. First Wing, 15 January 1941; II Interceptor Command, 9 April 1941; V Support Command, 31 January 1942; III Interceptor (later, Fighter) Command, 18 April 1942-1 May 1944. 4708th Air Defense Wing, 18 August 1955; 30th Air Division, 8 July 1956-8 January 1958. 56th Fighter Wing, 1 March 2014-.

⁵ AETC SO G-029, 8 January 2015

⁶ AETC SO G-006, 14 October 2016

⁷ AETC SO G-022, 22 March 2017

⁸ **SOURCE:** AF Historical Research Agency

⁹ AETC SO G-14-8, 21 February 2014

¹⁰ AETC SO G-14-8, 21 February 2014

¹¹ AETC SO G-14-8, 21 February 2014

¹² AETC SO G-17-17, 25 July 2017

¹³ AETC SO G-14-8, 21 February 2014

¹⁴ AETC SO G-15-5, 14 April 2015

Stations. Hamilton Field, California, 15 January 1941; Paine Field, Everett, Washington, 26 June 1941; Harding Field, Louisiana, 31 January 1942¹⁵; Bartow Army Air Field, Florida, 11 May 1943-1 May 1944. Greater Pittsburgh Airport, Pennsylvania, 18 August 1955-8 January 1958. Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, 1 March 2014-.

Aircraft.

Curtis P-36 Hawk	1941
Curtis P-40 Warhawk	1941-1942
Bell P-39 Airacobra	1942-1943
North American P-51 Lightning	1943-1944
North American F-86 Sabre	1955-1958
Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon	2014-.

Emblem. Originally approved 8 March 1957; newest rendition approved on 14 April 2014.

Blazon. Per bend Celeste and Azure, over a bomb bend sinisterwise, a lightning flash palewise Gules, fimbriated Argent, a bend of the last superimposed over all and charged with a jet aircraft in chief Sable, vapor trail of the third, all between an increscent moon and a radiant sun in fess all of the fourth, all within a diminished bordure Or.

Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed “54TH FIGHTER GROUP” in Blue letters.

Motto. None.

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 split background with the sun and the moon depicts the Group’s day and night mission of training combat warriors. The airfoil with contrail represents air superiority, one of the integral roles of airpower. The lightning bolt crossed with a bomb symbolizes the lethality inherent in airpower.

¹⁵ Hq AFFCC Letter 270.5, 21 Jan 1942 & SO Hq Paine Field No. 26 AB, n.d.

Commanders.

54th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) [15 January 1941-May1942]

Capt Harry A. Hammond	15 January 1941
Col Phineas K. Morrill	February 1941

54th Fighter Group [15 May 1942-1 May 1944]

Col Phineas K. Morrill	15 May 1942	
Col Charles M. McCorkle	6 September 1942 ¹⁶	[Major General]
Lt Col George B. Greene, Jr.	11 August 1943	
Lt Col Ward W. Harker	17 September 1943	
Col Joseph S. Holtoner	6 March 1944-1 May 1944.	[Major General]

54th Fighter Group (Air Defense) [18 August 1955-8 January 1958]

Unknown	18 August 1955-unknown
Col Edward F. Roddy	1955-Unknown.

56th Fighter Group [1 March 2014-.]

Col Rodney J. Petithomme	1 March 2014 ¹⁷
Col Jeffrey R. Jossen	27 June 2014- ¹⁸
Col James R. Keen	9 August 2016-Present ¹⁹

Narrative.

The 54th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) was established on 20 November 1940, but not activated until 15 January 1941 at Hamilton Field, California. Assigned to the First Wing, the squadron trained in the Curtis P-36 Hawk and Curtis P-40 Warhawk aircraft. On 9 April 1941, it was assigned to the II Interceptor Command. On 26 June 1941, the group moved to Paine Field, Everett, Washington. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the group flew defensive missions to protect the northwest coast. On 31 January 1942, it moved to Harding Field, Louisiana. Reassigned to the V Support Command, the unit began flying Bell P-39 Airacobras. On 15 May 1942, the group became the 54th Fighter Group and that summer, the air echelon flew to Alaska to help repulse the Japanese forces that invaded the Aleutian Islands. During those actions, the 54th shot down ten enemy aircraft and earned a Distinguished Unit Citation, and a World War II American Theater Service Streamer. The air echelon rejoined the group in December 1942. On 11 May 1943 moved to Bartow Army Air Field, Florida. The group became a replacement training unit for North American P-51 Mustang pilots. The group was disbanded on 1 May 1944.

On 20 June 1955, the Air Force reconstituted and redesignated the group as the 54th Fighter Group (Air Defense), which activated on 18 August 1955 at the Greater Pittsburgh Airport, Pennsylvania. Assigned to the 4708th Air Defense Wing, the group flew air defense with the

¹⁶ Ltr, 54 FG/CC to Adj Gen, War Dept, 3 Mar 1943

¹⁷ 56 FW SO GS-06-14, 1 March 2014

¹⁸ 56 MSG SO GS-20-15, 27 June 2014

¹⁹ 54 FG SO G-16-038, 25 July 2016

North American F-86 Sabre. On 8 July 1956, the group was assigned to the 30th Air Division, and continued its tradition of homeland defense until 8 January 1958, when it was inactivated.

On 20 February 2014, the group was redesignated the 54th Fighter Group. On 1 March 2014, the 54th Fighter Group was activated at Holloman AFB, New Mexico. Assigned to the 56th Fighter Wing, the group's mission is to train the world's greatest F-16 pilots while deploying mission ready warfighters.

Prepared 21 August 2017

Prepared by Rick Griset