

61st Fighter Squadron

Lineage.

Constituted as 61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor)
on 20 November 1940.

Activated on 15 January 1941.

Redesignated: 61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor)
(Twin Engine) on 31 January 1942.

Redesignated 61st Fighter Squadron (Twin Engine)
on 15 May 1942.

Redesignated 61st Fighter Squadron on 1 June 1942.

Redesignated 61st Fighter Squadron, Single Engine,
on 28 February 1944.

Inactivated on 18 October 1945.

Activated on 1 May 1946.

Redesignated: 61st Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, on 24 April 1947.

Redesignated 61st Fighter Squadron, Jet, on 14 June 1948.

Redesignated 61st Fighter-Interceptor Squadron on 20 January 1950.

Discontinued, and inactivated, on 25 Jul 1960.

Redesignated as 61st Tactical Fighter Squadron on 12 May 1975.

Activated on 30 June 1975.

Redesignated: 61st Tactical Fighter Training Squadron on 1 January 1980.

Redesignated 61st Fighter Squadron on 1 November 1991.¹

Inactivated on 12 August 1993.²

Activated on 1 April 1994.³

Inactivated on 30 September 2010.⁴

Activated 25 October 2013.⁵



¹ TAC SO G-12, 1 November 1991

² ACC SO GB-112, 19 July 1993

³ AETC SO G-34, 25 March 1994

⁴ AETC SO G-10-42, 13 August 2010

⁵ AETC SO G-13-22, 25 September 2013

Honors.

Service Streamers.

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers.

World War II European-African-Middle Eastern Theater

Air Offensive Europe [1942-1944]⁶

Normandy [1944]⁷

Northern France [1944]⁸

Rhineland [1944-1945]⁹

Ardennes-Alsace [1944-1945]¹⁰

Central Europe [1945]¹¹

Air Combat [1941-1945]

Decorations.

Distinguished Unit Citations

European Theater of Operations, 20 February-9 March 1944¹²;

Holland, 18 September 1944¹³.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 July 1977-1 January 1979¹⁴

1 July 1980-31 May 1982¹⁵

1 June 1984-31 May 1986

1 May 1987-30 April 1989¹⁶

1 May 1989-30 April 1990¹⁷

1 May 1990-30 April 1991¹⁸

⁶ WD GO 85, 10 October 1945

⁷ WD GO 102, 9 November 1945

⁸ WD GO 103, 13 November 1945

⁹ WD GO 118, 12 December 1945

¹⁰ WD GO 114, 7 December 1945

¹¹ WD GO 116, 11 December 1945

¹² WD GO 34/1945

¹³ WD GO 34/1945

¹⁴ DAF SO GB-719, 30 November 1979

¹⁵ DAF SO GB-117, 22 February 1983

¹⁶ TAC SO GA-053, 29 August 1989

¹⁷ TAC SO GA-048, 16 August 1990

¹⁸ TAC SO GA-069, 26 September 1991

Decorations. (Continued)

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (Continued)

1 July 1994-30 June 1996¹⁹
1 July 1996-30 June 1998²⁰
1 July 1998-30 June 2000²¹
1 July 2001-30 June 2003²²
[1 July] 2003-30 June 2005²³
1 July 2005-30 June 2006²⁴
1 July 2006-30 June 2007²⁵
1 July 2007-30 June 2008²⁶
1 July 2008-30 June 2009²⁷
1 July 2009-30 June 2010²⁸
25 October 2013-30 June 2014²⁹
1 July 2014-30 June 2015³⁰
1 July 2015-30 June 2016³¹
1 July 2016-30 June 2017³²
1 July 2017-30 June 2018³³
1 July 2018-30 June 2019³⁴

¹⁹ AETC SO GA-18, 15 November 1996

²⁰ AETC SO GA-12, 9 November 1998

²¹ AETC SO GA-9, 8 December 2000

²² AETC SO GA-55, 29 April 2004

²³ AETC SO GA-0052, 22 June 2006

²⁴ AETC SO GA-045, 8 May 2007

²⁵ AETC SO G-054, 28 February 2008

²⁶ AETC SO G-071, 3 April 2009

²⁷ AETC SO G-025, 11 March 2010

²⁸ AETC SO G-086, 9 May 2011

²⁹ AETC SO G-029, 8 January 2015

³⁰ AETC SO G-006, 14 October 2016

³¹ AETC SO G-022, 22 March 2017

³² AETC SO G-015, 19 Dec 2017

³³ AETC SO G-057, 20 May 2019

³⁴ AETC SO G-013, 18 Dec 2019

Squadron – 233 Total Aerial Victory Credits. 18 Squadron Aces:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Aerial Victories</u> ³⁵ | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | <u>In Sq</u> | <u>Total</u> | |
| Capt Joseph H. Bennett | 5.5 | 8.5 | |
| Capt James R. Carter | 6 | 6 | |
| Capt Paul A. Conger | 6.5 | 11.5 | |
| Lt Col Francis S. Gabreski | 28 | 34.5 | |
| 2d Lt Steven Gerick | 5 | 5 | |
| Sq Ldr Michael Gladych | 10 | 10 | |
| Capt Gerald W. Johnson | 7.5 | 16.5 | |
| Capt Robert S. Johnson | 25 | 27 | |
| 1st Lt Robert J. Keen | 7 | 7 | |
| 2d Lt Frank W. Klibbe | 7 | 7 | |
| Capt Robert A. Lamb | 7 | 7 | |
| 1st Lt Frank E. McCauley | 5.5 | 5.5 | |
| Flt Off Evan D. McMinn | 5 | 5 | KIA 6 June 1944 |
| Capt Joe H. Powers | 12 | 14.5 | |
| 1st Lt Robert J. Rankin | 10 | 10 | |
| 1st Lt Donovan F. Smith | 5.5 | 5.5 | |
| Maj Leslie C. Smith | 6 | 7 | |
| Maj James C. Stewart | 11.5 | 11.83 | |

Assignments. 56th Pursuit (later, 56th Fighter) Group, 15 January 1941-18 October 1945. 56th Fighter (later, 56th Fighter-Interceptor) Group, 1 May 1946; 4708th Defense Wing, 6 February 1952; 575th Air Defense Group, 16 February 1953; 64th Air Division, 6 August 1953; 4731st Air Defense Group, 1 April 1957; 327th Fighter Group, 15 October 1957-25 July 1960. 56th Tactical Fighter (later, 56th Tactical Training; 56th Fighter) Wing, 30 June 1975; 56th Operations Group, 1 November 1991-12 August 1993. 56th Operations Group, 1 April 1994³⁶-.

Stations. Savannah Air Base, Georgia, 15 January 1941; Charlotte Army Air Base, North Carolina, 26 May 1941 (deployed at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, October-November 1941); Charleston Muni Airport, South Carolina, 10 December 1941; Bridgeport Municipal Airport, Connecticut, 15 January -27 December 1942; Kings Cliffe, England, 12 January 1943; Horsham St Faith, England, 5 April 1943; Halesworth, England, 9 July 1943; Boxted, England, 19 April 1944; Little Walden, England, c. 15 September -11 October 1945; Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, 16-18 October 1945. Selfridge Field (later, Air Force Base), Michigan, 1 May 1946-25 July 1953; Ernest Harmon Air Force Base, Newfoundland, 6 August 1953; Truax Field, Wisconsin, 17 October 1957-25 July 1960. MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, 30 June 1975-12 August 1993. Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, 1 April 1994³⁷-.

³⁵ SOURCE: AF Historical Research Agency's Aerial Victory Credit database

³⁶ AETC SO G-34, 25 March 1994

³⁷ AETC SO G-34, 25 March 1994

Aircraft.

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Seversky P-35 | 1941 |
| Curtis P-36 Hawk | 1941 |
| Bell P-39 Airacobra | 1941-1942 |
| Curtis P-40 Warhawk | 1941-1942 |
| Republic P-47 Thunderbolt | 1942, 1943-1945, and 1946-1947 |
| North American P-51 Mustang | 1946-1947 |
| Lockheed P (later, F)-80 Shooting Star | 1947-1950 |
| North American F-86 Sabre | 1950-1951 |
| Lockheed F-94 Starfire | 1951-1954 |
| Northrop F-89 Scorpion | 1954-1957 |
| Convair F-102 Delta Dagger | 1957-1960 |
| McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II | 1975-1979 |
| Lockheed F-16 Fighting Falcon | 1980-1993, and 1994-2009. |
| Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning | 2014-. |

Emblem. Originally approved on 15 September 1943; newest rendition approved on 18 July 1995. Awaiting redraw by TIOH.

Blazon. Or, a caricature bulldog head couped affronté Proper winking its sinister eye garbed in an early aviator's helmet Sable, buckled Argent with goggles of the like and grasping in its mouth a lightning flash fesswise of the first; all within a diminished bordure Black.

Attached below the disc a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "61st FIGHTER SQ" in Black letters.

Motto. None.

Significance. Blue and 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 bulldog represents the tough fighting spirit of the unit and his flying gear suggests readiness to engage in combat. The lightning bolt denotes the weapons systems used by the squadron to defend the peace.

Commanders.

61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) [15 January 1941-31 January 1942]

Unknown 15 January 1941-31 January 1942

61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor)(Twin engine) [31 January 1942-15 May 1942]

Unknown 31 January 1942-15 May 1942

61st Fighter Squadron (Twin Engine) [15 May 1942-1 June 1942]

Unknown 15 May 1942-1 June 1942

61st Fighter Squadron [1 June 1942-28 February 1944]

Capt Merle C. Eby by February 1943
Maj Loren G. McCollom by 27 February 1943 [Major General]
Maj Francis S. Gabreski 9 June 1943 [Ace]
Maj James C. Stewart 12 January 1944-28 February 1942

61st Fighter Squadron, Single Engine [28 February 1944-18 October 1945

1 May 1946-24 April 1947]

Maj James C. Stewart 28 February 1944 [Ace]
Lt Col Francis S. Gabreski 13 April 1944 [Ace]
Maj Gordon E. Baker 20 July 1944
Maj Donovan F. Smith 26 September 1944
[Ace][Lieutenant General]
Maj James R. Carter 10 January 1945 [Ace]
Lt Col Gordon E. Baker 3 May 1945-Unknown

Unknown 1-2 May 1946
Maj Donovan F. Smith 3 May 1946-24 April 1947
[Ace][Lieutenant General]

61st Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled [24 April 1947-14 June 1948]

Maj Donovan F. Smith 24 April 1947 [Ace][Lieutenant General]
Lt Col John W. Gaff, Jr. May 1947-Unknown
Lt Col William D. Ritchie by January 1948-14 June 1948

61st Fighter Squadron, Jet [14 June 1948-20 January 1950]

Lt Col William D. Ritchie 14 June 1948
Maj Ralph A. Johnson by December 1948
Lt Col Albert S. Kelly by Jul 1949-20 January 1950

Commanders. (Continued)

61st Fighter-Interceptor Squadron [20 January 1950-25 July 1960]

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Lt Col Albert S. Kelly | 20 January 1950 |
| Lt Col Wallace B. Frank | 20 June 1951 |
| Maj Warren S. Patterson | c. July 1952 |
| Lt Col Max E. Wolfson | December 1952-Unknown |
| Maj Phillip A. Rand | 6 December 1954-Unknown |
| Maj Phillip Coady | c. 1957 |
| Lt Col Lassiter Thompson | by January 1958 |
| Maj William B. Myers, Jr. | c. 15 January 1959 |
| Lt Col Lassiter Thompson | c. 15 April 1959 |
| Lt Col John W. Singleton | September 1959 |
| Maj Clay E. Herbst | c. April 1960 |
| Maj Wilbur C. Schneider | c. May 1960-25 Jul 1960 |

61st Tactical Fighter Squadron [30 June 1975-1 January 1981]

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lt Col James C. Woods | 30 June 1975 |
| Lt Col Richard G. Fero | 1 June 1977 |
| Lt Col Michael E. Ryan | 27 April 1979-1 January 1981 |

[General CSAF]

61st Tactical Fighter Training Squadron [1 January 1980-1 November 1991]

| | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Lt Col Michael E. Ryan | 1 January 1980 | [General CSAF] |
| Lt Col Milan Zimer | 20 March 1981 | |
| Lt Col Frederic E. McCoy, II | 20 August 1982 | |
| Lt Col Edward B. Carter | 23 November 1983 | |
| Lt Col Harry C. Morgan | November 1985 | |
| Lt Col Dale C. Hill | December 1987 | |
| Lt Col Nicholas Holoviak | 14 July 1989 | |
| Lt Col Ralph B. Brown | 3 May 1991-1 November 1991 | |

Commanders. (Continued)

61st Fighter Squadron [1 November 1991-12 August 1993; 1 April 1994-30 September 2010; 25 October 2013-.]

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Lt Col Ralph B. Brown | 1 November 1991 |
| Lt Col Donald B. Ellis | 10 November 1992-12 August 1993. |
| Lt Col Ronald D. Woodward | 1 April 1994 ³⁸ |
| Lt Col Thomas W. Hyde | 11 August 1994 ³⁹ |
| Lt Col Daniel W. Jordan, III | 11 August 1995 ⁴⁰ |
| Lt Col Robert J. Locke | 7 March 1997 ⁴¹ |
| Lt Col Michael J. Carter | 26 March 1999 ⁴² |
| Lt Col Randel A. Lane | 6 November 2000 ⁴³ |
| Lt Col Patrick W. Christopherson | 11 June 2002 ⁴⁴ |
| Lt Col Jeffrey A. Hausemann | 30 March 2004 ⁴⁵ |
| Lt Col Douglas R. Miller | 24 May 2006 ⁴⁶ |
| Lt Col James R. Sears, Jr. | 12 July 2007 ⁴⁷ [Brigadier General] |
| Lt Col Philippe R. Malebranche | 6 October 2008-30 September 2010. ⁴⁸ |
| Lt Col Michael T. Ebner | 25 October 2013 ⁴⁹ |
| Lt Col Michael L. Gette | 26 June 2015 ⁵⁰ |
| Lt Col Rhett S. Hierlmeier | 12 June 2017 ⁵¹ |
| Lt Col Thomas E. Hayes | 31 May 2019-Present. ⁵² |

Narrative: Constituted Nov. 20, 1940, the 61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) activated at Savannah, GA, on January 15, 1941, in reaction to global threats prior to the United States entry into World War II. The squadron trained in Seversky P-35, Curtis P-36 Hawk, Bell P-39 Airacobra, and Curtis P-40 Warhawk. In May 1941, the 61st moved to Charlotte, NC, and six

³⁸ [58 MSS SO SO-G-73, 7 August 1992]

³⁹ 61 FS SO SO-GF-002, c. 11 August 1994

⁴⁰ 61 FS SO SO-GF-001, 11 August 1995

⁴¹ 61 FS SO GF-002, 6 March 1997

⁴² 61 FS SO GF-002, 26 March 1999

⁴³ 61 FS SO GF-008, 31 October 2000

⁴⁴ 61 FS SO GF-002, 24 April 2002

⁴⁵ 61 FS SO 56OSS-2004-G-5, 30 March 2004

⁴⁶ 61 FS SO 56 OG-G20o6-07, 28 April 2006

⁴⁷ 61 FS SO G-2007-008, 9 July 2007

⁴⁸ 56 MSG SO G-003, 6 October 2008; AETC SO G-10-42, 13 August 2010

⁴⁹ 56 MSG SO GS-02-14, 21 October 2013

⁵⁰ 56 MSG SO GS-08-15, 10 July 2015

⁵¹ 56 MSG SO G-16-17, 8 June 2017

⁵² 56 MSG SO G-16-17, 8 June 2017

months later to Charleston, SC, to help defend the East Coast. In 1942, the squadron converted to the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. In January 1943, the squadron moved with 56th Fighter Group to England and in April settled at Boxted Airfield, UK. In 1944, it was recognized as the first fighter squadron in the European theater to score over 100 victories. During 1943 to 1945, the 61st produced 18 Aces, the highest of any squadron in Europe, destroying 233 aircraft in the air and 67.5 aircraft on the ground.

Deactivated in October 1945 at Camp Kilmer, NJ, it reactivated at Selfridge Field, MI, training in P-47's while transitioning to North American P-51 Mustang. In April 1950, the 61st transitioned to the Lockheed F-80 Shooting Star and later became the first squadron to fly the North American F-86A Sabre. In 1951, it converted to the Lockheed F-94 Starfire. Three years later, the squadron converted to the Northrop F-89 Scorpion. In 1957, the 61st converted to the Convair F-102 Delta Dagger. The 61st deactivated on July 25, 1960, at Truax Field, Wisconsin.

In June 1975, the 61st reactivated at MacDill AFB, FL, flying the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom. In April 1980, the flying mission changed to the Lockheed F-16A/B Fighting Falcon. The 61st transitioned to the F-16C/D in June 1988 deactivated in January 1994.

The squadron reactivated on April 1, 1994 at Luke AFB, AZ, replacing the former 314th Fighter Squadron flying the F-16C/D Fighting Falcon. The squadron stood down August 27, 2010.

On 25 October 2013, the 61st Fighter Squadron reactivated. The 61st was Luke AFB's first squadron to fly the Lockheed F-35A Lightning II, the Air Force's newest fighter.

Locally Prepared on 20 February 2020

Locally Prepared by Rick Griset