61st Fighter Squadron

Lineage.
Constituted as 61st Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) on 20 November 1940.
Activated on 15 January 1941.
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.
Inactivated on 12 August 1993.
Activated on 1 April 1994.
Inactivated on 30 September 2010.

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]
- Normandy [1944]
- Northern France [1944]
- Rhineland [1944-1945]
- Ardennes-Alsace [1944-1945]
- Central Europe [1945]
- Air Combat [1941-1945]

Decorations.

Distinguished Unit Citations

- European Theater of Operations, 20 February-9 March 1944;
- Holland, 18 September 1944.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

- 1 July 1977-1 January 1979
- 1 July 1980-31 May 1982
- 1 June 1984-31 May 1986
- 1 May 1987-30 April 1989
- 1 May 1989-30 April 1990
- 1 May 1990-30 April 1991

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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 1996\textsuperscript{19}
1 July 1996-30 June 1998\textsuperscript{20}
1 July 1998-30 June 2000\textsuperscript{21}
1 July 2001-30 June 2003\textsuperscript{22}
[1 July] 2003-30 June 2005\textsuperscript{23}
1 July 2005-30 June 2006\textsuperscript{24}
1 July 2006-30 June 2007\textsuperscript{25}
1 July 2007-30 June 2008\textsuperscript{26}
1 July 2008-30 June 2009\textsuperscript{27}
1 July 2009-30 June 2010\textsuperscript{28}
25 October 2013-30 June 2014\textsuperscript{29}
1 July 2014-30 June 2015\textsuperscript{30}
1 July 2015-30 June 2016\textsuperscript{31}
1 July 2016-30 June 2017\textsuperscript{32}
1 July 2017-30 June 2018\textsuperscript{33}
1 July 2018-30 June 2019\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{19} AETC SO GA-18, 15 November 1996
\textsuperscript{20} AETC SO GA-12, 9 November 1998
\textsuperscript{21} AETC SO GA-9, 8 December 2000
\textsuperscript{22} AETC SO GA-55, 29 April 2004
\textsuperscript{23} AETC SO GA-0052, 22 June 2006
\textsuperscript{24} AETC SO GA-045, 8 May 2007
\textsuperscript{25} AETC SO G-054, 28 February 2008
\textsuperscript{26} AETC SO G-071, 3 April 2009
\textsuperscript{27} AETC SO G-025, 11 March 2010
\textsuperscript{28} AETC SO G-086, 9 May 2011
\textsuperscript{29} AETC SO G-029, 8 January 2015
\textsuperscript{30} AETC SO G-006, 14 October 2016
\textsuperscript{31} AETC SO G-022, 22 March 2017
\textsuperscript{32} AETC SO G-015, 19 Dec 2017
\textsuperscript{33} AETC SO G-057, 20 May 2019
\textsuperscript{34} AETC SO G-013, 18 Dec 2019
Squadron – 233 Total Aerial Victory Credits. 18 Squadron Aces:

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

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 1994-


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 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

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)

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

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 Ronald D. Woodward 1 April 1994
Lt Col Thomas W. Hyde 11 August 1994
Lt Col Daniel W. Jordan, III 11 August 1995
Lt Col Robert J. Locke 7 March 1997
Lt Col Michael J. Carter 26 March 1999
Lt Col Randel A. Lane 6 November 2000
Lt Col Patrick W. Christopherson 11 June 2002
Lt Col Jeffrey A. Hausemann 30 March 2004
Lt Col Douglas R. Miller 24 May 2006
Lt Col James R. Sears, Jr. 12 July 2007
Lt Col Michael T. Ebner 25 October 2013
Lt Col Michael L. Gette 26 June 2015
Lt Col Rhett S. Hierlmeier 12 June 2017
Lt Col Thomas E. Hayes 31 May 2019-Present.

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-G2006-07, 28 April 2006
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.


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