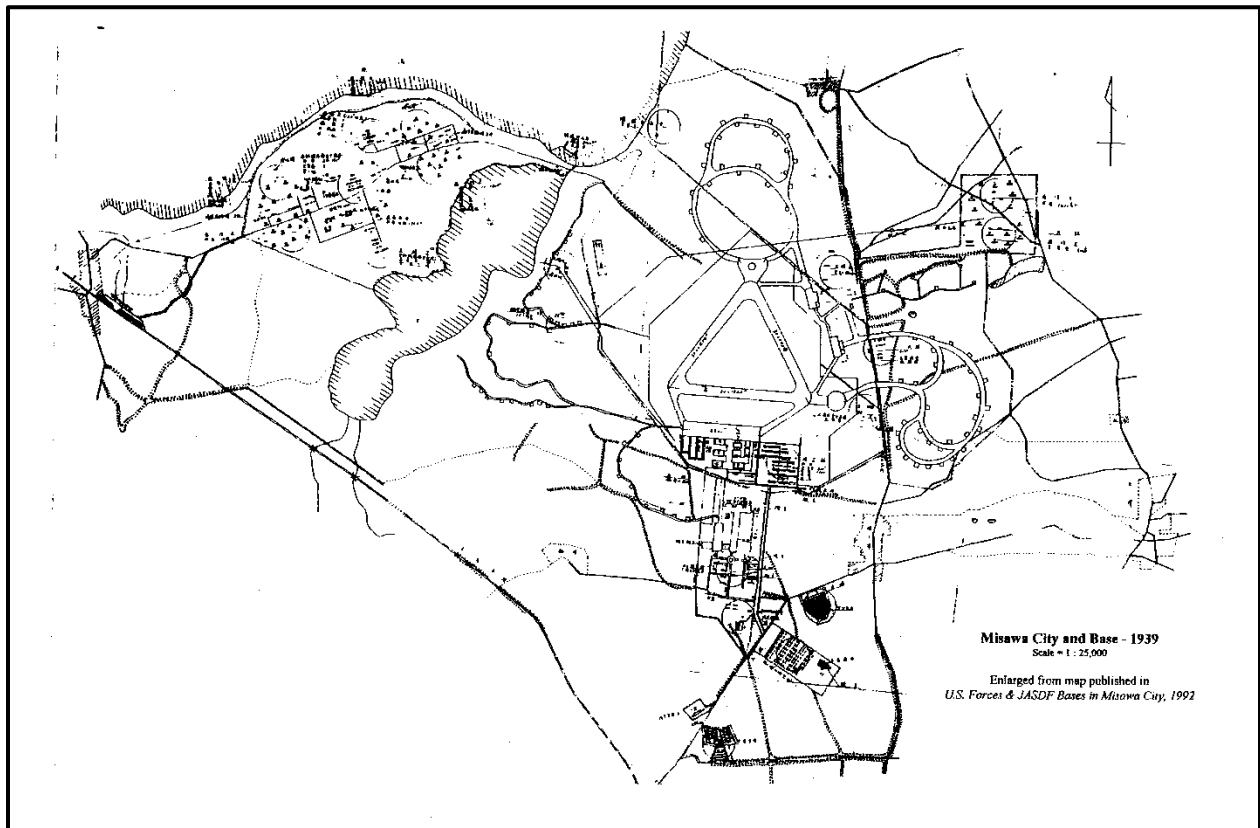




This Month in 35th Fighter Wing and Misawa Air Base History April 2014



1 April 1942: The **Misawa Air Group of the Imperial Japanese Naval Air Force** was **reorganized** into the 26th Air Combat Group under the command of Rear Admiral Masakuni Yamagata. The Group consisted of 27 bombers at Misawa, 27 bombers at Kisarazu, and the 6th Air Force at Kisarazu with 45 fighters and six reconnaissance aircraft.



12 April 1943: During a Japanese attack on an Allied position at Port Moresby, New Guinea, the 39th, 40th, and 41st Fighter Squadrons of the **35th Fighter Group** scored **17 aerial victories** to match the Group's record previously set on February 6, 1943. Captain Edward F. Graham of the 39th Fighter Squadron wrote:

April 12, 1943, will always be a memorable date in the minds of the squadron members who were stationed at Port Moresby. On this eventful day the Japanese Air Force undertook one of the largest aerial assaults yet staged on an Allied base in the southwest Pacific. In the mid-morning a formation of approximately seventy bombers and thirty fighters came in over the Owen and Stanley range to wipe out the air base. The squadron pilots were sitting cockpit alerts on Schwimmer Drome when the 4th Fighter Sector gave the signal to scramble. Every serviceable aircraft in the squadron was airborne. The Fighter Sector had not scrambled our planes in sufficient time for them



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to gain an advantageous altitude for meeting the enemy formation. Consequently, most of the 39th's planes attacked from below drawing fire from bombers and their fighter escort alike. In the fight over Moresby that morning the squadron brought down two Zekes [Mitsubishi A6M fighters] and three Bettys [Mitsubishi G4M medium-range bombers]. Captain Richard C. Suehr became the sixth ace when he shot down one of the Bettys.

A member of the 41st Fighter Squadron described a similar scene:

Approximately 45 medium bombers, Bettys and Nells [Mitsubishi G3M medium-range bombers], were sighted with approximately 50 single seat fighters, Zekes and Haps [Mitsubishi A6M3 fighters]. Escort flew above and behind close formations of bombers. Single seat fighters held off until we hit bombers to which they gave complete coverage. [The Japanese] were very offensive and pressed home all attacks on our fighters. Pilots seemed better than others we have had combat with....Our pilots destroyed the following enemy aircraft: 1 Betty, 1 Nell, 2 Zekes, and 2 Haps with one probable Zeke and one probable Betty....Losses inflicted on the enemy during the raid are as follows: 35th Fighter Group, 8 bombers destroyed, 7 fighters destroyed, 3 probable bombers, and 1 probable fighter.

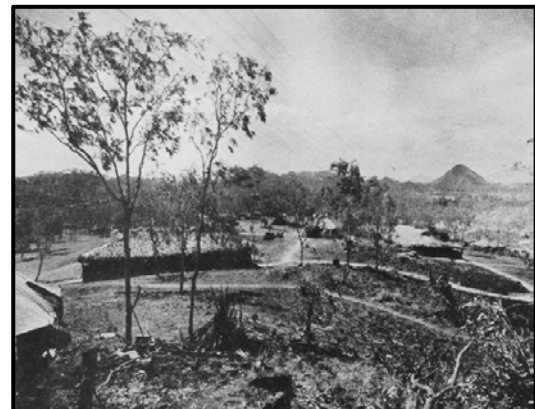
1 April 1950: The 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing began operations from Yokota Air Base under the command of Colonel Robert W. Witty.

1 April 1953: The 14th Fighter Squadron ended its short career from May 1952 to April 1953 as a troop carrier squadron. Redesignated the 14th Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, the pilots operated Curtis C-46 Commando transport aircraft from Mitchel Air Force Base, New York.



Above: Capt Robert Faurot, 39th Fighter Squadron, 35th Fighter Group at Schwimmer Airdrome.

Below: 35th Fighter Group Headquarters at Port Moresby, New Guinea.





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8 April 1966: The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing activated and began combat operations at Da Nang Air Base in South Vietnam. The 35th replaced the 6252d Tactical Fighter Wing and controlled two squadrons of F-4C Phantoms, two squadrons of B-57 Canberras, and flights of F-102 Delta Daggers. In the five months the wing served at Da Nang, the unit scored four aerial victories making the 35th Fighter Wing one of the few Air Force Wings to have scored air-to-air victories in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

26 April 1966: Major Paul Gilmore and Lieutenant William Smith scored the United States' first aerial victory over a MiG-21 in the Vietnam War. The pilot, Gilmore, and weapons system officer, Smith, were operating an F-4C Phantom from Da Nang Air Base and were assigned to the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 35th Tactical Fighter Wing.

April 1970: The 35th Tactical Fighter Wing began a two-month bombing campaign on enemy bases and supply caches in the Parrot's Beak area just inside the Cambodian border.

6 April 1981: A 250 kilogram bomb was discovered 3.5 meters underground in the Aomori City Shell Oil Company complex. U.S. Forces likely dropped the bomb in August 1945.

2 April 1985: The first F-16 trainer aircraft arrived at Misawa Air Base. Colonel Michael E. Ryan, 432d Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, piloted the first aircraft, which landed at 2:56 p.m. The 432d Tactical Fighter Wing was the immediate predecessor of the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa Air Base. (See [Northern Light, April 5, 1985.](#))

4 April 1986: Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger visited Misawa Air Base.

11 April 1997: General John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited Misawa Air Base.

14 April 1997: The 14th Fighter Squadron became the first PACAF unit to deploy in support of Operation Northern Watch, patrolling the no-fly zone over northern Iraq. (See [Northern Light, April 18, 1997.](#))

13 April 1998: Lieutenant Colonel Salvatore A. Angelella assumed command of the 13th Fighter Squadron. In August 2005, then Colonel Angelella assumed command of the 35th Fighter Wing, and in July 2012, Lieutenant General Angelella assumed command of U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force.



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25 April 2003: On June 6, 1949, U.S. Forces in Japan assumed control of Draughon Range, known at the time as Amagamori Range; however, the Government of Japan did not approve the range for use under the Status of Forces Agreement until 1952. In April 1961, the Air Force renamed Amagamori range the Misawa Air-to-Ground Gunnery & Bombing Range. At the time, pilots and ground crews called it Ripsaw Range. Forty-two years later, on April 25, 2003, **the 35th Fighter Wing renamed and dedicated Ripsaw Range in memory of Petty Officer Matthew Draughon**, a U.S. Navy diver onboard the USS Safeguard. He was lost on May 5, 2001, during the dive recovery operation of a Misawa F-16DJ aircraft that crashed into the Pacific Ocean east of Ripsaw Range. He was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. Draughon Hall, Naval Combined Bachelor Housing, was dedicated by the U.S. Navy the same day.

15 April 2004: **Brigadier General William J. Rew assumed command of the 35th Fighter Wing.**