



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



The month of August contains several important anniversaries including the end of World War II in the Pacific. Over time, the United States has been both enemies and allies with the nation of Japan. This month, the 35th Fighter Wing recalls with respect our common heritage:

August 7, 1942: The Misawa Air Group, Imperial Japanese Navy, deployed Mitsubishi G4M1 bombers to Rabaul, New Guinea to counter the U.S. 1st Marine Division's attack against Tulagi and Guadalcanal Islands. Most of the Group's bombers were destroyed by U.S. carrier based fighters within days of their deployment. On August 24, the remaining aircraft of the Misawa Air Group attacked U.S. forces in the Battle of the Eastern Solomons. The battle lasted through August 25.



August 18, 1943: **Major Ralph Cheli**, 405th Bombardment Squadron, 38th Bombardment Group, **led his squadron of B-25 Mitchell bombers in a dive attack on the Dagua Airdrome** in a crippled aircraft. He refused to abort the mission, knowing it would disorganize and expose his formation to the enemy. After ditching his plane over sea, he was captured and made a prisoner of war. However, he did not survive captivity. For his valor, Cheli received the Medal of Honor.

Misawa Air Base named the Cheli Child Care Center in his honor in 1991.





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August 1945: The 35th Fighter Group relocated to Okinawa in June and continued operations with P-51 Mustangs from the islands through the end of the war. The 35th Fighter Group Historian wrote:

August became the "Month of Rumors," anticipation and excitement. Personnel of the 35th Fighter Group, as well as every other organization, were highly keyed up over the events of the month. First, the United States released the powerful atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Members of this organization were in sight of the explosions caused by the second atomic bomb. The men, not having seen anything like it before, returned from their flight with many different conceptions as to what had actually taken place. Secondly, the news came that Russia had declared war against Japan. This chain of events was a great factor in boosting the morale of the unit. Many men had been overseas for a long period and looked hopefully towards returning home.

On the 10th of August, we received the news that the enemy was willing to accept our peace terms.



**P-51 Mustangs of the 35th Fighter Group in the air over Yanton Airdrome, Okinawa on July 27, 1945.**

August 8-9, 1945: Approximately 30 U.S. Navy Grumman aircraft attacked Misawa Air Base destroying 45 aircraft on the ground. The resulting fires devastated about 90 percent of the base. A Japanese naval officer later reported that two U.S. aircraft were shot down by anti-aircraft fire.



August 15, 1945: Japan announced its surrender as the war in the Pacific ended, and the Emperor of Japan ordered the disbanding of all military units at Misawa Imperial Naval Air Base.

**U.S. Navy, Grumman F4F Wildcat fighters in formation, circa mid-1943.**



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August 18, 1948: The U.S. Air Force activated the 35th Fighter Wing at Johnson Air Base, Japan, under command of Colonel Edgar M. Scattergood Jr. As the numerical successor to the U.S. Army Air Force's 35th Fighter Group, the 35th Fighter Wing received temporary bestowal of the group's history and honors. The 35th Fighter Wing served at Johnson Air Base until May 1951. In 1978, the U.S. Government returned Johnson Air Base to the Government of Japan. It was renamed Iruma Air Base.

August 26, 1955: A nine-hole golf course officially opened on Misawa Air Base as Colonel J. P. Randolph, 49th Fighter Bomber Wing and Misawa Air Base Commander, took the opening tee shot.

August 11-12, 1958: Torrential rain in northern Japan raised the Iwaki-Gawa River over its banks and flooded the city of Hirosaki. Fierce currents prevented the use of rescue boats, and Hirosaki city officials asked Misawa's 6139th Air



**The Misawa Air Base golf course club house in 1961.**

Base Group, about 80 miles to the east, for help. In a series of rescue missions, H-19 helicopters from the 6139th airlifted 113 stranded flood victims from roofs, bridges, vehicles, trees, and islands of higher ground by cable and transporting them to relief centers.

August 20, 1961: Major Otis C. Russell, 21st Armament & Electronics Maintenance Squadron, bowled the first "300-game" at the Misawa Air Base bowling alley.

August 24, 1979: The 6112d Air Base Wing hosted Cope North 79-2 at Misawa Air Base. The exercise was the first time that U.S. and Japanese fighters participated in joint air-to-ground missions. Due to the sensitivity of Japanese participation in offensive tactical air training, the 6112d Air Base Wing did not disclose the event to the media.

August 18, 1980: The Japan Air Self-Defense Force alert aircraft at Misawa Air Base were armed with Sidewinder air-to-air missiles for the first time. Previously, these aircraft were armed only with 20-millimeter cannons. Two days later, the newly armed aircraft scrambled against a Soviet TU-16 reconnaissance aircraft that had penetrated the Japanese Air Defense Identification Zone.



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**Divers retrieve an Air Force F-84G Thunderjet from Lake Ogawara in 1982.**

August 21, 1982: An F-84G Thunderjet that crashed into Lake Ogawara in 1954 was pulled onto Misawa's beach and prepared for disposal. See [Northern Light, September 3, 1982](#).

August 15, 1988: The new \$2 million, 24-lane bowling center opened on Misawa Air Base.

August 27, 1990: Misawa's Cummings Elementary School opened its doors to approximately 500 students. See [Northern Light, August 17, 1990](#).

August 21, 1998: Misawa's "Friendship Park" officially opened. The park displayed a USAF F-16, unofficially named the *City of Wenatchee*, and a JASDF F-1, named the *City of Misawa*. The naming depicted the relationship shared between Wenatchee, Washington, and Misawa City, stemming from the first non-stop flight across the Pacific by Clyde Pangborn and Hugh Herndon in the Miss Veedol. The historic flight began in Misawa and ended in east Wenatchee near Pangborn's hometown.

August 28, 1998: Misawa's Sollars Elementary School reopened in a new four-building complex. See [Northern Light, July 31, 1998](#) and [Northern Light, September 4, 1998](#).