

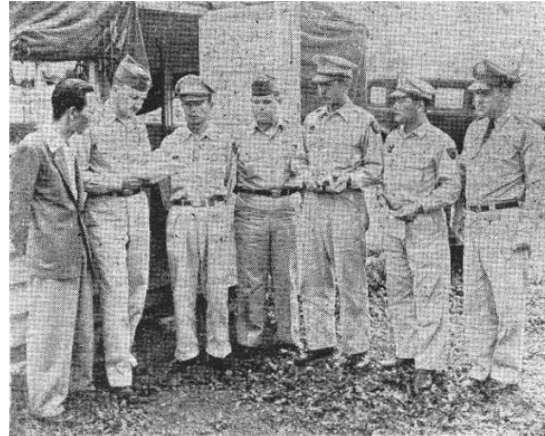


This Month in 35th Fighter Wing and Misawa Air Base History October 2014



October brings the beginning of a new fiscal year and a traditional time for the establishment and activation of many Air Force units. October 1 marked several important milestones in the history of Misawa Air Base and the 35th Fighter Wing:

October 1, 1954: The Japan Air Self Defense Force established the 9001st Aircraft Control and Warning Group at Misawa Air Base. It was the first Japanese military unit at Misawa Air Base since the end of World War II and signaled a greater cooperation between the U.S. and Japan in the mutual defense of Japanese Air Space. Airmen of the 9001st trained with the U.S. Air Force's 511th Aircraft Control and Warning Group in a project dubbed Operation Cherry Blossom. The long-term goal of the operation was to replace U.S. Airmen with Japanese Airmen in manning Japan's early warning and defense system. See The Misawa Wing Spread, September 24, 1954.



October 1, 1957: The 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing was inactivated at Yokota Air Base, Japan. The organization had served in Japan and Korea since the end of World War II and remained inactive until the Vietnam War. The 35th Fighter Wing returned to Japan 37 years later at Misawa Air Base.

October 1, 1975: The U.S. Navy established Naval Air Facility Misawa at Misawa Air Base in order to host Patrol Wing One and the U.S. Naval Weather Service Environmental Detachment. In 1972, the Pacific Air Forces had ceased regular flight operations from Misawa, and the U.S. Navy established Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific Detachment Misawa to assume all U.S. flight line operations at the base. Increasing personnel and operations tempo necessitated the commissioning of Naval Air Facility Misawa in 1975. See Northern Light, October 10, 1975.



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October 1, 1978: The Pacific Air Forces' 6112th Air Base Wing assumed host responsibilities at Misawa Air Base from the U.S. Air Force Security Service's 6920th Security Squadron. The Pacific Air Forces had ceased all regular operations at Misawa in 1972, and did not resume regular flight operations until 1984.

October 1, 1994: The 35th Fighter Wing activated at Misawa AB replacing the 432d Fighter Wing. The move was part of the Air Force's effort to protect its legacy by ensuring units with distinguished histories remained active. A heritage scoring system ranked the 35th Fighter Wing third out of over 200 units.



Additional historic events in October:

October 4, 1931: Clyde Pangborn and Hugh Herndon departed Misawa's Sabishiro Beach in the Miss Veedol, a 1931 Bellanca J-300 aircraft, and landed 41 hours and 13 minutes later in Wenatchee City, Washington. Their flight was first nonstop, trans-Pacific flight.

October 18, 1942: The 39th Fighter Squadron of the 35th Fighter Group returned to Port Moresby, New Guinea, equipped with the new P-38 Lightning aircraft. The P-38 replaced the squadron's P-39 Airacobras and was a much more capable air-to-air platform. The 39th Fighter Squadron was the only squadron of the 35th Fighter Group to receive the P-38, and the 39th quickly outstripped the 40th and 41st Fighter Squadrons in numbers of aerial victories.

At Port Moresby, the 35th Fighter Group established comparatively comfortable living conditions. Capt. Edward F. Graham wrote:

When the 39th returned to Port Moresby on October 18, 1942, it established a permanent campsite in the vicinity of 14-Mile Drome where it operated. None of the campsites of the 35th Fighter Group were together -- but dispersed throughout the whole area. Comfortable living conditions were established. Showers had concrete floors, mess halls were screened and there was satisfactory sanitation throughout the entire camp.



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A year later, the 35th Fighter Group continued to operate out of the area of Port Moresby, and in October of 1943, the unit participated in long-range escort missions to Rabaul. Capt. Graham wrote of the 39th Fighter Squadron:

After the Markham Valley operations, the squadron began participating in the long missions to Rabaul from Port Moresby. Between September and November, Rabaul was neutralized as a potential threat to Allied operations in North Eastern New Guinea. On October 23rd, 24th, and 29th, the squadron destroyed nine enemy planes over Rabaul while escorting bomber strikes. Capt. Charles W. King's two victories on October 29th made him the 12th squadron "ACE" within the past eleven months of operational activity. On November 2nd, First Lieutenant Hamilton H. Salmon destroyed an enemy fighter plane over Cape Gazelle, New Britain. The squadron now had a total of 137 enemy planes destroyed and was the leading fighter squadron in the Southwest Pacific -- but this was to be the squadron's last chance for air combat for over a year.

Most of Japan's airpower in the region had been destroyed, and the 35th Fighter Group engaged in several close air support and training flights in the new P-47 Thunderbolt.

October 10, 1944: The 40th Fighter Squadron of the 35th Fighter Group conducted an 850-mile endurance mission from the Schouten Islands in New Guinea to Borneo. The 40th Fighter Squadron Historian recorded:

Perhaps the most outstanding achievement of the squadron was its participation in the longest fighter mission in the history of World War II. This was flown on the 10th of October 1944 from Owi, N.E.I. (Netherlands East Indies). The uncompleted strip at Morotai, N.E.I. was used to stage through for the 850 mile flight to Balikpapan, Borneo, N.E.I. The mission was completed and repeated on 14 October 1944, again successful. Nineteen enemy planes were destroyed on these missions with the loss of three of ours. One pilot is still missing.

The mission reports are available here.

October 31, 1945: 2nd Lt. Albert M. Wiget of the 39th Fighter Squadron scored two aerial victories, the 35th Fighter Group's final aerial victories of World War II. The 35th ended the war with 394 aerial victory credits and 20 pilots achieving status as aces.



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October 18, 1967: The 14th Fighter Squadron entered the Vietnam War when it transferred from Bergstrom Air Force Base, Texas, to Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. The squadron flew reconnaissance missions in RF-4C Phantom II aircraft over North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia through the end of the war.

October 15, 1971: The U.S. Marine Corps activated Company E of the Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion at Security Hill on Misawa Air Base.

October 13, 1972: Capt. Jeffrey S. Feinstein, a 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron Weapon Systems Officer, achieved ace status when he and aircraft commander Lt. Col. Curtis D. Westphal downed the squadron's final MiG of the Vietnam War with an AIM-7 Sparrow missile.

October 18, 1982: The 81st Tactical Control Flight, Misawa Air Base, deployed an all-female control team to a joint U.S.-Japan aerial exercise for the first time. The women deployed to the Tobetsu ground controlled intercept site in support of Cope North 83-1.

October 22, 1982: F-15s of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force made their first deployment to Misawa Air Base to conduct test flights at Draughon Range.