WORLD-FAMOUS ROCKETEERS:

THE 336TH FIGHTER SQUADRON'S ROLE

IN ACHIEVING NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

BY

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis illuminates the history of the 336th Fighter Squadron within the political context of national aims in war. It focuses on the squadron's origin and accomplishments during the Second World War and the 1991 Gulf War as formative periods that represent distinct interactions between political objects and military actions. The squadron-focused narrative highlights individual accomplishments and challenges as well as the unit's development of team morale and camaraderie. The thesis concludes by offering a perspective on the employment of airpower as a political instrument and the significance of the unit's contributions toward national objectives.

CONTENTS

Introduction

> *The squadron is the beating heart of the United States Air Force; our most essential team. We succeed or fail in our missions at the squadron-level because that is where we develop, train, and build Airmen. Our service culture and traditions manifest themselves in the squadron because our Airmen most readily identify with this core fighting unit.*
>
> General David Goldfein, CSAF

> *If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it.*
>
> Carl von Clausewitz

As the core unit of mission accomplishment in the Air Force, the squadron is a natural historical lens. A squadron's members gain a sense of identity and purpose through their unit's history. The history of the 336th Fighter Squadron, known as the 'World-Famous Rocketeers,' or simply the 'Rockets,' reveals the significance of its contributions to national objectives. Today, the squadron is based at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, and flies the F-15E Strike Eagle. The unit's origin and operations during the Second World War, and its employment in the 1991 Gulf War represent distinct interactions between political objectives and the use of military force to achieve them; these two periods of the squadron's history were formative and constitute the focus of this narrative.

The unit was founded in the British Royal Air Force (RAF) as Number 133 Squadron, the third of three Eagle Squadrons that consisted of American volunteer aviators who flew with the RAF prior to the United States' entry into the Second World War. The Eagle Squadrons served both to defend Britain and strengthen America's support of the war. The formation of Number 133 Squadron, and its transition into the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) as the 336th Fighter Squadron, helped achieve Winston Churchill's political objectives and aligned the objectives of Britain and the United States.

The 336th contributed to the Allied air campaign in Europe as part of the 4th Fighter Group under the 8th Air Force. Flying Spitfires, P-47s, and P-51s, the squadron escorted Allied bombers during the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO), engaged the Luftwaffe in preparation for D-Day, helped counter Hitler's V-weapon offensives, and attacked German aircraft on the ground in the final stages of the war. The 336th helped defeat the Luftwaffe to ensure air supremacy over the skies of Normandy. The unit's efforts also contributed to the Anglo-American strategy of Germany First, and established the military conditions for American political influence in western Europe after Germany's unconditional surrender.

At the conclusion of the Cold War, the 336th became the first operational F-15E squadron in the USAF. The Rockets deployed in 1990 in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, executing interdiction and offensive counterair operations against Iraqi fixed and mobile ballistic missile launchers to achieve American and coalition political objectives. The squadron also struck critical Iraqi infrastructure and fielded armor in preparation for the ground invasion. A squadron-focused approach to Air Force history highlights the individuals involved in combat, the role the unit played within American airpower strategy, and the significance of one squadron's contributions to national aims.

Chapter 1

Royal Air Force Number 133 Squadron

> *Let us to the task, to the battle and the toil… There is not a week, nor a day, nor an hour to be lost.*
>
> Winston Churchill

War is inseparable from its political context.[1] The politics in Europe before the Second World War led to Great Britain's fight for survival, and in this context, Number 133 Squadron was formed as one of three Eagle Squadrons of American volunteers in the RAF.

The Political Context of the Second World War

The Great Depression was a global economic crisis that caused many nations to turn inward. International trade plummeted, and as German exports dwindled, factories were shut down and poverty became widespread. Unemployment in Germany, a nation of 60 million people, rose from 1,320,000 in September 1929 to over 6 million at the beginning of 1932.[2] By the end of the year, advocates of moderate trade policies were drowned out by cries of economic nationalism.[3] Germany's exclusion from most of the Paris peace conference in 1919 contributed to growing resentment. The Great War myth of the undefeated German army that was 'stabbed in the back' when its civilian government signed the armistice of 11 November 1918 was perpetuated, challenging the notion of a German defeat.[4] A growing domestic consensus considered its current state merely a transitory condition for which a remedy was sought with little regard for moderation.[5] Political parties with extreme solutions profited, and by July 1932 the Nazi party was the largest in the Reichstag with 37.3 percent of the seats.[6] After seizing power

[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 605.
[2] John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989), 34.
[3] Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 28.
[4] Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 58.
[5] "In war the result is never final." Clausewitz, *On War*, 80.
[6] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 35.

in January 1933, Hitler employed his evil genius to harness popular frustrations; his rhetoric of Anglo-French injustice against Germany resonated, for as Thucydides said, "the present always weighs heavy on the conquered."[7] Hitler strove to cast off the weight of the present by creating a mass movement with a new morality based on the idea of a master Aryan race and its dire need for 'living space.' His policies of state investment in public works and industry cut unemployment and earned further popular support.

Hitler embarked on a recovery from the depression through military spending, and rearmed in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. He announced the creation of an air force in March 1935, along with a peacetime army of at least 36 divisions.[8] Hundreds of thousands of new jobs became dependent on military sales, with serious long-term implications for Germany's economic structure.[9] By 1938, Western leaders recognized Hitler's ideology as more than mere bluster tailored to a domestic audience. Employing the concept of self-determination on behalf of ethnic Germans in Austria, Hitler annexed the state on March 11, 1938, overturning the post-World War I treaty structure and spreading a German nationalism not seen in Europe since before the time of Bismarck. Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain hesitated to challenge Hitler, viewing Germany as a check on the spread of communism. The Führer turned to the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia and the three million Germans that lived adjacent to the Bavarian border. He demanded that the territory be added to the Reich. The Soviets, French, and British refused to act in concert to oppose Hitler's demands. Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, and Mussolini signed the Four Power Agreement at Munich on 29 September 1938, ceding the Sudetenland to Germany in what came to be viewed as an infamous act of appeasement.[10] Frustrated with the way he saw events developing yet still on the political periphery, Winston Churchill said, "The [British] Government had to choose between shame and war. They chose shame and will get war."[11]

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had mixed feelings toward Munich. He appreciated that Europe was not choosing war but lamented the price of appeasement.

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[7] Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Strassler, Robert, trans. Crawley, Richard (New York: Free Press, 1996), 44.
[8] Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 208.
[9] Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 208.
[10] Jean E. Smith, *FDR* (New York: Random House, 2007), 423–25.
[11] Smith, *FDR*, 425.

With an army of only 185,000 men and a strong isolationist consensus, America could offer little support and Roosevelt could only encourage a peaceful agreement.[12] He began work to lead and reshape American opinion in order to be more prepared should the future hold further turns for the worse in Europe. In August 1938, Roosevelt offered a defense guarantee to Canada if it were to be attacked. In his address at Queen's University in Ontario, FDR said, "we are no longer a far away continent to which the eddies of controversies beyond the seas could bring no harm. The Dominion of Canada is part of the sisterhood of the British Empire. I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other Empire."[13]

In response to Hitler's ominous behavior and in step with FDR's leadership, American public opinion began to move. In October 1938, a Gallup Poll indicated 92 percent of Americans doubted Hitler's claims that he had no further territorial aims, 77 percent thought his demand for the Sudetenland unjustified, and 60 percent believed Munich would more likely lead to war than peace. Meanwhile, the expulsion of ten thousand resident Polish Jews, without notice or legal recourse, was underway in Germany.[14]

In mid-November, Roosevelt held an Oval Office meeting to discuss America's course of action to deter Hitler. Containment through airpower was a critical component of his plan for checking Nazi aggression. Specifically, FDR wanted to halt German expansion by bolstering the British and French air forces with American planes. He argued, "Hitler would not have dared to take the stand he did … if the United States had five thousand warplanes and the capacity to produce ten thousand more within the next few months."[15] The president was motivated not only to increase the industrial base for rapid expansion of aircraft production in America should the situation worsen, but also to supply Britain and France with aircraft before any declarations of war were made in order to avoid the limitations of the Neutrality Act of 1935, which imposed a ban on military material trade to any belligerent states. Roosevelt communicated the seriousness of the

[12] Smith, *FDR*, 425.
[13] Smith, *FDR*, 425.
[14] Smith, *FDR*, 426.
[15] Smith, *FDR*, 428–29.

situation to the Senate Military Affairs Committee in the White House, arguing the threat of German expansion was an imminent threat: "Would any of you have said six years ago when this man, Hitler, came into the control of the German Government…that in six years [he] would dominate Europe, completely and absolutely?"[16] FDR urged the senators, "I am frankly hoping that the French will be able to get the fastest pursuit planes we can turn out. I hope they will get the best heavy and medium bombers they can buy in this country. And I hope to God they get the planes and get them fast…That is the foreign policy of the United States."[17]

Hitler annexed the remainder of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, breaking his pledge at Munich and further revealing his true intentions.[18] Yet, the United States remained an anxious onlooker, limited by the neutrality acts and a significant isolationist sentiment in Congress and in the public at large.[19] FDR's efforts to contain Hitler by building and exporting aircraft to Europe were met with bureaucratic resistance and moved more slowly than the German army.

Britain and France were more alert after Hitler's violation of the Munich Pact.[20] Then, on 21 August 1939, Germany and Russia concluded the startling Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact, dashing Chamberlain's hopes for a tacit agreement between Britain and the Soviets to contain Hitler. The Führer unleashed fifty-six Wehrmacht divisions into Poland on September 1.[21] Bound to Poland by military alliance, Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. The appeasement at Munich had failed. The Soviet army moved west to meet German forces in Poland, dividing its territory in half.

Across the Atlantic, America remained a concerned onlooker. In a fireside chat on 3 September 1939, Roosevelt said, "this nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a

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[16] Smith, *FDR*, 431.
[17] Smith, *FDR*, 431–32.
[18] Smith, *FDR*, 432.
[19] Waldo H. Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 8.
[20] Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997), 28.
[21] William Manchester and Paul Reid, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012), 35–36.

right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or his conscience."[22]

On 27 September, Germany, Japan, and Italy signed the Tripartite Pact, a military alliance meant to discourage American actions to counter imperialism in either Europe or the Pacific by imposing the prospect of a two-front conflict.[23] After six months of tense anticipation of Hitler's next move, German forces stormed into Denmark and simultaneously landed in Norway on the morning of 9 April 1940. The British and French were unprepared to resist. Unwilling and unable to take a stand, and facing a vote of no confidence in the House, Chamberlain resigned as Prime Minister on 10 May. He was replaced by Winston Churchill. The same day, Hitler sent his army into the Low Countries and three German panzer corps, two thousand tanks in all, penetrated the Ardennes forest and streaked across France, reaching the English Channel by 20 May.[24] Following an urgent request for military assistance from Churchill, FDR addressed a joint session of Congress on 16 May: "The brutal force of modern offensive war has been loosed in all its horror. No old defense is so strong that it requires no further strengthening and no attack is so unlikely that it may be ignored."[25] Roosevelt urged an increase in American production from 6,000 to 50,000 aircraft per year.[26] That would take time, however, which was a resource that was dwindling for the British.

With the French army and British expeditionary forces cut off by maneuver warfare on the continent, the miraculous evacuation of men and equipment from Dunkirk ensued. Operation Dynamo rescued British expeditionary forces in addition to 100,000 French troops between May 29 and June 2, although the British were forced to abandon most artillery, small arms, ammunition, and 120,000 vehicles.[27] Churchill put the successful withdrawal in perspective in a speech before the House on June 4. "Wars are not won by evacuations" and "what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster," yet Dunkirk was "a miracle of deliverance, achieved by valor, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by recourse, by skill, by

[22] Smith, *FDR*, 436.
[23] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 66.
[24] Smith, *FDR*, 445–47.
[25] Smith, *FDR*, 446.
[26] Smith, *FDR*, 446.
[27] Smith, *FDR*, 447.

unconquerable fidelity." Then Churchill delivered a moving vision that captured both his sense of purpose and Britain's plight:

> Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender. And even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until in God's good time, the New World with all its power and might steps forward to the rescue and the liberation of the old.[28]

Churchill's loyalty was to a moral principle, and he was prepared to inspire Britain to sacrifice for the sake of a greater good.[29] His speech was aimed at both Britain and America. Nazism posed a threat beyond Europe and its existence was an evil that made the world less safe. Britain's ultimate war aim would therefore be "victory at all costs."[30] Yet, victory was unimaginable without American participation. Churchill maintained three short-term political objectives in support of Britain's aim:

1. To ensure Britain's survival as an independent state, without which there was no chance of taking the war to Germany.

2. To maintain Britain's belligerence, with which her presence would be a mere shadow on Hitler's flank.

3. To secure the United States' involvement in the war, without which there could be no victory, and with which ultimate victory was sure.[31]

[28] Manchester and Reid, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965*, 86.
[29] Stephen Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy: A History of the Battle of Britain* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), 16.
[30] Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, 15.
[31] Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, 15–16.

Yet, Churchill struggled to win American hearts and minds. A May 1940 opinion poll found only 7% of Americans willing to commit to war on the Allied side.[32] After the fall of France at the end of May, the number expecting a British victory fell from 82% to 32%.[33] In this context of uncertainty in America and increasing potential for world war abroad, the first Americans were already in the midst of volunteering to fight with the British in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The formation of the RAF Eagle Squadrons of American volunteers directly addressed Churchill's three objectives, for it was the political context and Britain's dire need that brought these squadrons into existence.

The Origin of the Eagle Squadrons

In the United States, news from the war had made headlines for months, and many Americans had begun to take note of international affairs after the invasion of France. A few young men who anticipated the course of events and, expecting the United States to become involved sooner or later, began to look for opportunities of their own. On 10 May 1940, twenty-seven-year-old Andy Mamedoff, a White Russian with a penchant for gambling and a desire to fly fast airplanes, was at Union Station in Los Angeles with his twenty-three-year-old friend, Eugene Tobin.[34] The two were about to board a train and proceed illegally to Canada, then on to France to train as pilots and fight against the Luftwaffe. Little did they know of Hitler's initial move into France on the same day, however. Both recruits would end up with the RAF to become members of "the few" who defended the island during the upcoming air war over England. Andy Mamedoff would become the only American member of Number 133 to participate in the Battle of Britain, which took place a full year before the formation of the squadron.[35] Mamedoff and Tobin had been recruited by American Colonel Charles Sweeny, who placed discreet notices describing "opportunities" with certain European air forces in newspapers and around airfields across the U.S.[36]

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[32] Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, 16.
[33] Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, 16.
[34] Alex Kershaw, *The Few: The American "Knights of the Air" Who Risked Everything to Fight in the Battle of Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006), 4.
[35] Kershaw, *The Few*, 239.
[36] Kershaw, *The Few*, 4–6.

Co-founder of the Eagle Squadrons, Colonel Sweeny was an adventurous young man who fought in the U.S. Army and later became a global soldier of fortune. He fought as an underage soldier during the Spanish-American War, briefly attended West Point, served with the French Foreign Legion and later the U.S. Army in World War I; he fought in the Polish army at the Battle of Warsaw in 1920, aided the Spaniards in Morocco in 1925, and traveled to Spain in 1937 to observe the use of aviation during the Spanish Civil War. Sweeny had been loosely involved with the Lafayette Escadrille during World War I, and in 1939, he endeavored to recruit a contingent of American pilots to volunteer in support of the French air force. With his connections to a flying school in Southern California, Sweeny succeeded in recruiting 32 pilots to go to France between 13 April and 10 May 1940, including Andy Mamedoff and Eugene Tobin.[37]

At the time of Colonel Sweeny's early efforts, U.S. neutrality laws forbade recruiting within the U.S. for foreign military services, and Sweeny was subject to the close scrutiny of the FBI.[38] Mamedoff and Tobin, for example, had been warned they could be fined ten thousand dollars, jailed for several years, and forfeit their American citizenship.[39] On one occasion, Sweeny narrowly avoided arrest in Los Angeles, leaving the city shortly before the arrival of FBI agents who had been monitoring his activities, and escaping up to three years in prison for violating the neutrality laws. Unfortunately, Sweeny's early recruits were also blindsided by the German invasion of France in May 1940, and of the thirty-two young men sent to that country, four were killed, eleven were taken prisoner, five escaped to England, and twelve simply disappeared, likely escaping through Spain.[40] Among the five who escaped to England were Mamedoff and Tobin, who sneaked past guards to board the *Baron Nairn* sailing for Britain from St Jean de Luz, France; the ship departed on 23 June, narrowly avoiding the capture of the port by the Nazis less than two hours later.[41] Colonel Sweeny continued his efforts in America for a short period after the fall of France, sending these recruits directly to England to

[37] Philip Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF: The WWII Eagle Squadrons* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1998), 23–27.
[38] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 25.
[39] Kershaw, *The Few*, 4.
[40] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 26.
[41] Kershaw, *The Few*, 52.

meet up with his nephew of the same name, Charles Sweeny. Colonel Sweeny later moved on to support other wartime activities.[42]

Charles Sweeny, the younger nephew of Colonel Sweeny, was the more direct founder of the Eagle Squadrons. Charles was the son of Robert Sweeny Sr., brother of Colonel Charles Sweeny. Unlike his brother, Robert Sweeny Sr. went into business after graduating from Harvard Law School, settled in London, and became a well-known and wealthy member of British society. After growing up with his family in England, Charles attended Yale University and returned to the business world in London after his time in America. As a patriotic American and resident of London with political connections, Charles became convinced after war broke out that U.S. assistance would be critical to ultimately defeat Germany. The Eagle Squadron of American volunteers was his idea, and gained the support of U.S. Ambassador John Winant, who was enthusiastic about the concept of American participation.[43]

Charles Sweeny used his connections with the British government to make his case for the Eagle Squadron. He contacted the Minister of Production in June 1940, and was eventually brought before the entire Air Council to describe his proposal. A personal assistant also mentioned the idea to Winston Churchill directly, who was enthusiastic about the plan.[44] The concept of a squadron of American volunteers addressed his most pressing political objectives in the war. It simultaneously bolstered the British fighting forces, helped maintain resistance against Germany, and strengthened the bond with America. Should the Eagle Squadron become involved in the fight, the Americans would naturally follow the conflict more closely and support their boys fighting for the British.

Owing to political backing at the highest levels in Britain, Charles Sweeny's efforts to form an Eagle Squadron resulted in the creation of Number 71, officially founded in July 1940. Due to ongoing operational issues during the Battle of Britain, it was not until 8 October 1940 that the pilots were in place in England and Air Minister Sinclair officially announced the existence of the first squadron of American volunteers. Although Sweeny's original vision was a single squadron, there would eventually be

[42] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 26-27.
[43] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 28–29.
[44] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 30–31.

three squadrons; the Eagles would include a total of 244 American volunteers and 16 Englishmen.[45]

Sweeny's efforts were undertaken amid a large American effort already underway to resupply the British to make up for their losses at Dunkirk. In early June, the U.S. sold 22,000 .30-caliber machine guns, 25,000 Browning automatic rifles, 900 75mm howitzers, 58,000 antiaircraft weapons, 500,000 Enfield rifles, and 130 million rounds of ammunition to Britain. These arms were sold at cost and substantially rearmed the British Army, with the exception of tanks, within six weeks of the evacuation from Dunkirk.[46] In a speech on 10 June, President Roosevelt asserted, "We will extend to the opponents of force the material resources of this nation; and at the same time, we will harness and speed up the use of those resources in order that we ourselves may have equipment and training equal to the task. Signs and signals call for speed—full speed ahead."[47] Winston Churchill later responded, "I send you my heartfelt thanks and those of my colleagues for all you are doing and seeking to do for what we may now indeed call a common cause."[48]

Britain Under Attack

On 16 July 1940, Hitler issued an order for the invasion of England, known as Operation Sea Lion.[49] In order to secure an amphibious invasion, Germany first needed to control the air. During the ensuing German offensive air campaign, known as the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe brought 2,670 aircraft to bear against the 1,475 aircraft of the Royal Air Force.[50] As the aerial conflict played out over the British countryside, airfields, and eventually over London, millions of Americans tuned in to radio broadcasts and followed accounts in the newspapers. The stories inspired future 133 Squadron members like Edwin Taylor, George Sperry, and Marion Jackson to try to become RAF pilots themselves during this time. While some were undoubtedly urged by feelings of moral responsibility against Hitler's aggression, many of these men simply had a sense of adventure and a desire to fly the world's most capable fighter aircraft: the Spitfire and the

[45] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 34–35.
[46] Smith, *FDR*, 447–48.
[47] Smith, *FDR*, 448–49.
[48] Smith, *FDR*, 449.
[49] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 15.
[50] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 15.

Hurricane.[51] Future 336th Fighter Squadron commander Carroll McColpin said, "I knew that the United States would soon be in the war and I would be involved. I certainly did not want to spend the war on the ground, so the RAF looked like the way to go for me."[52]

The RAF struggled to produce enough pilots to keep pace with its combat losses during the Battle of Britain. Of approximately 1,000 pilots in Fighter Command at the beginning of the campaign, fewer than 700 remained at its conclusion in October 1940. In sum, the command lost 515 fighter pilots killed and 358 wounded during the battle. After the Battle of Britain, the German air offensive did not cease entirely, but slowed and transitioned to more infrequent night bombing raids later in 1940 and into 1941. The worst was over for the Britons, as Hitler officially cancelled Operation Sea Lion and turned eastward, moving two-thirds of his airpower to the eastern front by June 1941 in support of the invasion of the Soviet Union.[53]

Not only did the Battle of Britain demonstrate the increasing importance of airpower to military operations, but also the necessity of continued pilot production during periods of conflict. The call went out to the British Commonwealth and other friendly nations even as the neutrality laws in the U.S. created legal difficulties for young Americans who were interested in supporting the cause. Somewhere between 7 and 11 Americans took part in the Battle of Britain, flying with RAF squadrons prior to the formation of the Eagle Squadrons, but the British needed more assistance and quickly. The confusion as to the exact number of participating Americans lies in the fact that several were listed as Canadian citizens on the RAF roster.[54]

Organized Recruitment

In addition to the early efforts of Colonel Charles Sweeny and his nephew, another significant effort to recruit American pilots was undertaken by an American pilot and artist named Clayton Knight. After volunteering for the U.S. Army air service during the First World War, Knight completed flying training and was subsequently posted with the British in France, where he flew and was eventually shot down and wounded on 5 October 1918. He was imprisoned by the Germans and later released at the end of the

[51] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 15–16.
[52] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 16.
[53] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 18–19.
[54] Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy*, 175.

war. Knight remained involved in the U.S. aviation scene as an enthusiast and illustrator, and was contacted in September 1939 by an old friend and World War I pilot, Billy Bishop, an Air Marshal in the Canadian Air Force. Bishop was concerned with developments in Europe following Britain's declaration of war, and persuaded Knight to help recruit flying instructors to go to Canada and train pilots for the RCAF in case the war expanded. Knight formed the Clayton Knight Committee in the spring of 1940, which would be responsible for processing almost 50,000 American applications for service in the RAF or the RCAF, including more than 80 percent of the future members of the Eagle Squadrons.[55]

Due to Knight's social and business connections, he was well placed to undertake a massive recruiting effort. Along with other business partners, he established a suite at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York as an administrative center. He was also an acquaintance of General Hap Arnold and coordinated his recruiting efforts with the U.S. Army. U.S. aviation service standards required pilot candidates to have 20/20 vision, while those of the British and Canadians only required 20/40.[56] General Arnold remarked to Knight, "According to the rules I'm working under, if a flying cadet gets fractious, goes in for low stunt flying, gets drunk even once or we discover he's married, we've got to wash him out. If I was fighting a war, they're the kind I would want to keep. I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of our washouts look you up."[57]

Unlike Colonel Charles Sweeny's secretive operation, Clayton Knight's recruiting system was out in the open and was investigated by the FBI in July 1940. Neither the State Department nor the Justice Department took action to hinder the operations of Knight's committee, and the issue of neutrality was blurred after the fall of France in June 1940, from which point the prohibition on recruiting for foreign military services was no longer enforced. In addition to his New York office, Knight opened offices in Memphis, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Dallas, San Antonio, Oakland, and Los Angeles. A key distinction between these recruiting efforts was that Sweeny was actively recruiting to form an RAF Eagle Squadron, whereas Knight was running a

[55] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 37–39.
[56] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 40–41.
[57] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 41.

large-scale operation to get volunteers to Canada as instructor pilots.[58] Where those pilots would go from Canada, however, was essentially up to them. The personal account of LeRoy Gover, who was recruited by the Knight Committee and would later command the 336th Fighter Squadron in late 1943, is a good example of the kind of decision that many of the Eagles were making during this time period:

> I certainly didn't know if the United States would become involved in the war but the passage of the Selective Service Act by Congress and England's struggle to survive during the Battle of Britain sure made me figure that I was going to war pretty soon. It seemed like that was the talk almost everywhere, especially around the airport. I think that I became aware that it was time to make a decision when my good flying friend Bill Nichols decided to join the RAF. I really wasn't sure that was the direction I should take at that time (late 1940), but when I heard that he was in the Eagle Squadron [Number 71 was the only Eagle Squadron at that time] and was flying Spitfires, I started to think seriously about joining the RAF myself. I knew that I had plenty of flying experience but couldn't qualify for Army or Navy pilot training since I hadn't gone to college. And flying the Spitfire, wow! …I decided that I would go up to Oakland and check out this Clayton Knight Committee that was recruiting pilots to fly for the RAF.[59]

To understand the origin of Number 133, it is useful to discuss the formation of each of the Eagle Squadrons. Number 71 was the first squadron founded in July 1940, but even after its official announcement in October, the unit did not yet have any aircraft.[60] The Battle of Britain drew to a close at the end of October, so the first Eagle Squadron did not participate in the battle, although several American volunteers did who eventually made their way to the American units. On 24 October, the first aircraft arrived in the form of three Brewster Buffaloes, which were old American fighters.[61] Not only were these aging fighters not fit for the front lines in Europe, they also proved America's inability to provide significant aid due to the neutrality acts. Following Roosevelt's election for an unprecedented third presidential term in November 1940, he explained a new concept called 'Lend-Lease' to the media on 17 December, which provided a

[58] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 42–46.
[59] Philip Caine, *Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer: An American Fighter Pilot over Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1995), 5–6.
[60] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 78.
[61] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 76.

remedy for restrictions on aiding the British: "Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away, if he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now what do I do? I don't say to him, 'Neighbor, my garden hose cost me fifteen dollars; you have to pay me fifteen dollars for it.' No! I don't want fifteen dollars. I want my garden hose back after the fire is over."[62]

Roosevelt made aid to Britain a renewed priority after his reelection, and a growing political consensus favored aid to Britain, though not a military alliance. With Roosevelt's backing, the eventual passage of the Lend-Lease bill in Congress in March 1941 overcame the last great resistance of the isolationists in America.[63] By the time Lend-Lease passed the Senate, the first Eagle Squadron (Number 71) had been constituted for 5 months. The second squadron (Number 121) would soon be formed, and the third (Number 133) would follow in August 1941.

The first Hurricane I's were delivered to Number 71 in November 1940 after the RAF had begun to recover from aircraft losses sustained during the Battle of Britain.[64] Despite the Lend-Lease agreement, it would not be until late 1942 that the first American fighters would be delivered in large quantities to American forces in Britain. For the remainder of 1940, Number 71 continued to prepare for combat and flew its first shipping escort patrols over the North Sea in January 1941. In April, the squadron was moved south to Martlesham Heath to join the action-filled zone covered by the Fighter Command's 11 Group, where squadron members encountered their first air to air engagements.[65]

Just as Number 71 was moving toward increased combat involvement in mid-1941, the second Eagle Squadron, Number 121, was formed on 14 May 1941 and trained at Kirton-in-Lindsey, a quiet coastal base in 12 Group. Due to the success of the Clayton Knight Committee's recruiting efforts, there were so many Americans available by May that the choices were either to spread them out among existing RAF squadrons, or to create yet another Eagle Squadron. The progression of Number 121 to combat-ready

[62] Smith, *FDR*, 485.
[63] Heinrichs, *Threshold of War*, 11.
[64] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 136.
[65] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 153–54.

status was more rapid due to the learning process that Number 71 had already undergone. Number 121 flew Hurricane I's for two months before transitioning to the more combat-effective Hurricane IIb. The squadron was in combat by early August 1941, and flew 980 operational sorties that month, including a few escorts for bombers on missions into France.[66]

Meanwhile in America, President Roosevelt held a fireside chat with the American public via national radio on 27 May with the goal of mobilizing support for policies that carried more risk of war. The president argued that Hitler's aims not only extended beyond Europe, but now encompassed the whole world. The war was in fact "approaching the brink of the Western Hemisphere itself…coming very close to home."[67] With German U-boats posing risks in the Atlantic to Lend-Lease shipments to Britain, America needed to play a more active role in defense of the hemisphere. Roosevelt warned that Iceland, Greenland, the Azores, and Cape Verde could provide stepping stones for an assault on America's neighbors or on the nation itself. American opinion in favor of armed convoy escort rose from 41 percent on 15 April to 55 percent on 9 June 1941.[68] The importance of sealing off Germany's access to the Atlantic and protecting American and international shipping made the North Atlantic a critical area. Unbeknownst to them at the time, the pilots of Number 133 were to serve an important role in securing the Atlantic in late 1941. Before the squadron was formed, however, the direction of Hitler's strategy became more apparent as he engaged in a massive buildup along the eastern border with the Soviet Union.

Hitler smashed into his once-ally, the Soviet Union, on 22 June 1941 in a devastating display of military strength. One hundred and eighty divisions of 3.8 million men, thousands of aircraft, tanks, and artillery pieces swept into Russia in three parallel surges stretching from the Baltics south to the Ukraine.[69] The Russians lost over 2,000 aircraft during the first two days, many of them still on the ground.[70] Winston Churchill was undoubtedly relieved that some of the pressure was taken off the immediate defense

[66] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 170–80.
[67] Heinrichs, *Threshold of War*, 84.
[68] Heinrichs, *Threshold of War*, 83–85.
[69] Smith, *FDR*, 495–96.
[70] Heinrichs, Waldo H., *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II*, 100.

of Britain. He responded with support for the Soviets to a British radio audience on 22 June: "No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years…I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding…Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people."[71] Roosevelt followed Churchill in offering aid to Russia on 23 June.[72]

These declarations were followed up two weeks later by the first wartime summit between Roosevelt and Churchill in Argentia Harbor off the coast of Newfoundland on 7 August 1941. The leaders discussed closer bilateral coordination of naval procedures for convoy escort in the Atlantic, a joint declaration of aid to Russia in the wake of the German invasion, and signed an enduring document that came to be known as the Atlantic Charter.[73] The Atlantic Charter was a joint declaration of principles adopted by the two nations that "renounced territorial aggrandizement, supported self-determination, favored a loosening of trade restrictions, reaffirmed the desire to seek a world free from fear and want, and proclaimed the freedom of the seas."[74] It was a significant commitment on the part of the United States, still a neutral in the war, and established a vision that only America would have the enduring power to uphold at the conclusion of the Second World War.

The Formation of Number 133

In a political environment of increasing American involvement with the British, the number of American pilot recruits in Britain sufficed to form the third Eagle Squadron, Number 133, which was announced by Fighter Command on 1 August 1941. The squadron's motto was "Let us to the Battle," taken from one of Winston Churchill's speeches; its emblem was an eagle with wings spread on a background of stars. Squadron Leader George A. Brown called the first meeting of pilots together in late August: "Gentlemen, no Englishman is more appreciative than I to see you American Volunteers over here to assist us in our fight. It is going to get a lot tougher as time goes

[71] Smith, *FDR*, 496.
[72] Smith, *FDR*, 496.
[73] Smith, *FDR*, 502.
[74] Smith, *FDR*, 502.

by—so, take a good look around this room, because a year from now most of you will be dead."[75] After the initial shock set in, everyone "glanced around at one another, all with the same thought in mind—you poor ignorant bastards, you've had it."[76] As a combat veteran, Brown was already conditioned to the facts of death in a combat squadron; he shattered any romantic illusions the men had about war.

Because Numbers 71 and 121 were already in combat, Number 133 was first employed to train recruits before sending them to the other Eagle Squadrons. The unit received its initial cadre and moved its fleet of Hurricane IIs to RAF Duxford on 16 August. The squadron's first pilots included Marion Jackson, Ronald Wolfe, Walter Soares, Cecil Meierhoff, Coburn King, William White, George Sperry, Roy Stout, James Nelson, L.S. Loomis, Hugh McCall, and Robert Pewitt.[77]

They spent their time at Duxford learning basic formation skills, air discipline, and mission-specific training. Unfortunately, the first mishap occurred less than two weeks into the training when Walter Soares and Charles Barrell collided turning onto final approach during a practice mission and both were killed. On a brighter note, the early squadron leadership was a respected and experienced group. Squadron Leader Brown was transferred from Number 71 and experienced working with Americans; the two flight commanders, H.A.S. Johnston and Andy Mamedoff were also experienced in combat.[78]

During its first few weeks, the squadron moved from Duxford to Colly Weston, then to Fowlmere, as the RAF struggled to determine what role the new unit would play. Most of the new recruits would be sent to Number 133 as the unit lost some experienced pilots to Number 71, the first Eagle Squadron engaged in combat operations. Regarding the challenge, Eric Doorly said, "our training for combat in OTU was lousy…So when we got into any kind of action I just didn't know what to do. The scary part was that I didn't know who to ask either. You see we were all green pilots put together and you didn't have the cadre of experienced people who could take the younger ones on and say, 'Look, if you want to live more than two or three days you better learn these few things.'

[75] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 188.
[76] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 188.
[77] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 188.
[78] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 189–90.

Of course, this changed over a period of time but until we got to Biggin Hill…we were a uniformly green squadron and it showed."[79]

Eglinton, Northern Ireland

The squadron's challenges with inexperienced pilots were also apparent when Number 133 transferred to Northern Ireland to complete training and fly convoy patrol over the North Atlantic. The journey to Eglinton in early October turned tragic when a portion of B Flight hit a large hill while descending in poor weather to refuel on the Isle of Man, while several other planes missed the terrain by mere feet. Veteran Eagle Andy Mamedoff, who had fought in the RAF since the Battle of Britain, was killed alongside William White, Roy Stout, and Hugh McCall. Within two weeks of arriving at Eglinton, George Bruce and Gene Coxetter also lost their lives in separate flying accidents.[80] It is difficult to imagine the loss of eight pilots during the first two months of Number 133's existence; Edwin Taylor said, "not only the devastating impact of losing four pilots at one time and the need to replace them, but the loss of experience with Mamedoff, the loss of the airplanes, which were so scarce—we never really recovered from that crash until we were at Biggin Hill."[81]

To honor their fallen squadron mates, the unit marched to the cemetery in a formal procession. It was an RAF tradition that became more routine for the Eagle Squadrons than any wished to acknowledge. Yet, the war was underway and the mission beckoned. Pilots transferred in from other Eagle Squadrons to replace those who were lost and Fighter Command replaced the destroyed Hurricanes with Spitfire II's that arrived in late October; they were flown on operational missions within a few days.[82]

In addition to new aircraft, the squadron received a new commander when RAF officer Eric H. Thomas replaced George Brown, who was transferred to Fighter Command Headquarters. Many in the squadron credited Thomas with 'whipping the unit into shape' and preparing it for service in 11 Group, when it would begin battling the Luftwaffe over the Channel and the European continent. Thomas favored formation

[79] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 191.
[80] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 191–92.
[81] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 192.
[82] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 194–95.

flying and teamwork over individual heroics, and improved the squadron's sense of discipline in the air.[83]

At the end of 1941, Number 133's convoy escort mission aligned with Roosevelt's strategy of increased American involvement in the Atlantic, although none of the pilots liked the convoy patrols. The weather was frigid, not to mention the water temperatures in the North Atlantic, should any of the airmen have to bail out before reaching land. Fortunately, that event never occurred at Eglinton.[84] Yet, in protecting Allied shipping from enemy aircraft and scouting for German naval activity, the squadron furthered Roosevelt's political objective to protect American aid to Britain through the Lend-Lease program. At the Atlantic Conference, Roosevelt had committed American naval escorts for shipping in the western Atlantic. After a German submarine attacked the USS *Greer* on 4 September, FDR authorized escorts further east to Iceland. While he made no subsequent call for escalation, he also did not explain that the American warship had been providing tracking information on the submarine for British patrol planes for several hours prior to the encounter.[85] American warships were escorting convoys to Iceland, while Americans in RAF Number 133 were protecting shipping along the northwest approaches to Ireland by late October. The squadron's convoy patrols thus completed the final leg of American protection of shipping across the Atlantic while still keeping the nation officially out of the war.

Little did the pilots of Number 133 know, they were also standing guard over the transatlantic passage of some of their future squadron mates. On 20 November 1941, Lee Gover set sail from Halifax, Nova Scotia on the *Emma Alexander* after completing pilot training for the RAF.[86] Gover was from San Carlos, California and joined the RAF through the Clayton Knight Committee in May 1941.[87] He heard rumors about the dangerous journey across the Atlantic; the biggest concern was the threat from German submarine wolf packs. During the first two thirds of Gover's 16-day voyage, the *Emma Alexander* traversed in a convoy protected by American destroyers. Just east of Iceland,

[83] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 195–96.
[84] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 196.
[85] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 103.
[86] Caine, *Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer*, 17.
[87] Caine, *Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer,* xii.

per the Atlantic Charter agreement, the destroyers turned back. Gover wrote in his journal on 3 December, "our two American destroyers just now left us. They came back through the convoy and headed for Halifax. Sure hated to see them go, as we now have only a British trawler, two destroyers and a light cruiser taking us through."[88]

Gover's account of his journey through the very area that was being defended by his future squadron mates in 133 reflected the tense maritime environment: "5 December 1941—8:30 a.m. Everything went along pretty well last night…I was on deck this morning but no land in sight. I sneaked up on the bridge last night and talked to the first mate. Talked about torpedoes and such. This is the spot the *Atlantis* was torpedoed at the start of the war…it's now 12:45 p.m. and I just came off watch. We sighted land at 10:00 a.m. It was Northern Ireland…There are now just five ships and we don't have an escort. We're running along at a good clip trying to make it under the cover of night."[89] Gover disembarked two days later and made his way to London to sign in at the British Air Ministry.

America at War

America's political objectives were progressively more aligned with Churchill's nearing the end of 1941. By the end of 1940, Britain had accomplished Churchill's first objective of ensuring its own survival by winning the Battle of Britain and forcing the Luftwaffe to shift to a strategy of sporadic night bombing. Britain's survival was more assured when Hitler turned east to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941. Now, the United States was heavily involved in helping Britain accomplish the second political objective of maintaining belligerence in the conflict. America's Lend-Lease assistance combined with its protection of shipping in the Atlantic to help guarantee Britain's continued capability to fight. Only Churchill's third political objective of securing U.S. involvement in the war remained. Shortly after the Atlantic Conference, he wrote his son, Randolph, "One is deeply perplexed to know how the deadlock is to be broken and the United States brought boldly and honourably into the war."[90] Unlike the situation in 1917, when Germany had declared open submarine warfare and the Zimmermann

[88] Caine, *Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer,* 23.
[89] Caine, *Spitfires, Thunderbolts, and Warm Beer,* 24.
[90] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 104.

Telegram had been uncovered, implying a German-Mexican alliance, there was not yet any major emotional issue for Americans in 1941.

The activities of American volunteers continued to receive publicity in America. Perhaps even more important than their accomplishments in battle, which for the Eagle Squadrons were few at that point, the political value of the squadrons in gaining the support of the American public was immense. On 1 December, for example, future 336th pilot Donald Emerson was working in Chicago and wrote to his family that he and several buddies took in a show at the Chicago Theater entitled "A Yank in the RAF."[91] The film was a hit in 1941, and brought all of the American volunteers who had come to the aid of the British to center stage in the national dialogue. Congress also voted to extend the draft by renewing the Selective Service Act by a narrow margin in September 1941, indicating that national sentiment was continuing to move toward cautious involvement in the war effort.

By the beginning of December 1941, the members of Number 133 were restless and growing tired of convoy patrol.[92] Other missions at Eglinton included "practice interceptions, gun-camera dog fight[s], air firing, local reconnaissance, dusk landing, cloud flying, an aircraft test, a battle climb to 25,000 feet, aerobatics, and formation flying."[93] However, the pilots were ready to move south to 11 Group. During this period, the squadron's motto, "Let us to the Battle," seemed quite ironic; it perfectly represented the prevailing sentiment among the pilots. They wanted their chance to make a bigger impact against the Luftwaffe.

Meanwhile, an expansionist Japan kept surrounding states and American forces in the Pacific in a heightened state of alert. By December 1941, Japan already held Indochina, Manchuria, and portions of eastern China. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December, Number 133 was ready more than ever to get into the action. The news was cause for anger, but more immediately for elation. Pilot Denver Miner described the scene in the squadron:

> I was listening to BBC…when a calm voice broke into the middle of a number and…stated that the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor and now the

[91] Sandra D. Merrill, *Donald's Story* (Berlin, MD: Tebidine Publishing, 1996), 15.
[92] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 196.
[93] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 196.

> United States was in the war. I let out a yell that could be heard all the way to Derry…I gave them the news I had just heard…That was the start of a bash to end all bashes—with unashamed tears running down their cheeks and patting each other on the back and buying drinks for each other…The next few days a pall seemed to fall over the guys. Gone was the horse-play of the past. I suspected, like myself, they were doing some soul searching and thinking of the short distance from the Hawaiian Islands to our cities on the West Coast and evaluating our worth at this crucial time in our lives.[94]

It seems odd for the squadron to have celebrated the news of Pearl Harbor; yet, their reaction is understandable considering the context of the Eagles and what the attack meant for them.[95] These American volunteers had received enthusiastic news coverage and supporting wishes from home, but they were ultimately fighting for a British cause from the outset of their service. Now, they not only knew that America would be entering the war, but that they would be able to fight for their own country as well. That night, Winston Churchill "slept the sleep of the saved and thankful."[96] In his fireside chat to America on the evening of 9 December, FDR told the nation, "We are now in this war…We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking in American history. We must share together the bad news and the good news, the defeats and the victories."[97]

Another RAF squadron arrived at Eglinton to replace Number 133 in the convoy escort duty, and the members of 133 learned they were being moved back to England. On 31 December, the squadron departed Northern Ireland and travelled by train and ship to Kirton-in-Lindsey, arriving on 2 January 1942. They left behind their Hurricanes and Spitfires at Eglinton and received a new batch of Spitfire VB's at their new base.[98]

Major Carroll McColpin became the first American commander of Number 133 on 23 January 1942. Squadron Leader Eric Thomas remained as the British commander until the position was transferred entirely to the Americans in July 1942. McColpin had been interested in airplanes since childhood, and by his mid-twenties had flown twenty-eight different aircraft and accumulated 500 hours of flying time. He wanted to fly in the

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[94] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 197.
[95] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 197.
[96] Smith, *FDR*, 537.
[97] Smith, *FDR*, 540–41.
[98] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 198–99.

USAAF, but lacked the required two years of college to qualify as an aviation cadet. As with so many others, the Clayton Knight Committee provided a ready option for him, so he signed up in the fall of 1940. Ironically, McColpin received a draft notification while he was still in America in a refresher pilot training program. He had a better idea, however, and soon boarded a train from Los Angeles to Montreal to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. McColpin eventually made his way to Great Britain and flew in Numbers 121 and 71 before joining 133. He was listed as a draft dodger in America until the record was corrected in 1942.[99]

Into the Action

The pilots spent their time at Kirton-in-Lindsey transitioning to the new Spitfire VB, learning how to fly in England's winter conditions of muddy runways, snow, and fog, and shoveling snow off the runways. Despite poor weather throughout January, it was not long before the pilots of 133 got the opportunity for which they had long waited. On 5 February, several 133 pilots experienced their first encounter with the Luftwaffe. It was a typical winter day with cloud bases overcast at 2,000 feet, and the pilots were flying below the weather on a convoy patrol. Hugh Johnston and Marion Jackson battled a Do 217 that tried to bomb the convoy, while McColpin fired every round of ammunition in his Spitfire and damaged another Do 217. One of the enemy bombers crashed into the water after taking fire from two Spitfires and a surface ship. The engagement was a milestone for 133, and almost every pilot who flew that day fired their guns at a Luftwaffe aircraft for the very first time. The pilots claimed no kills, but the squadron had worked together as a team and kept the allied convoy from being damaged by the bombers. Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas visited the unit later that month to bring a congratulatory telegram directly from the King.[100]

The remainder of February passed with little flying due to poor weather. Along with the high points in the squadron's journey, there were lows. Tragedy struck late in the month when Sam Whedon was forced to bail out in England after a midair collision. He successfully parachuted to the ground, but high winds at the surface caused him to fall

[99] Philip Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons: American Pilots Who Flew for the Royal Air Force* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2009), 275–78.
[100] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 204–5.

backwards and hit his head on a rock, killing him instantly. Squadron member George Sperry remembered, "Sam was not only a good friend, but one of the most popular and admired pilots in the unit…we all felt his loss more than any could express."[101] The occurrence was a harsh reminder of the dangers involved in aviation, whether in training or combat, in the air or on the ground.

During the unit's first year, there was rapid turnover in personnel as pilots were lost in combat or training, yet mobilization also increased the number of new arrivals along with the operations tempo. On 16 March, Hugh Brown was lost during a weather check over the English Channel. The seemingly benign mission to report the cloud heights could be extremely disorienting, because low clouds and fog often extended down to the water's surface. The pilots sometimes had to inch their way down through the weather, while flying on instruments, to determine if conditions were suitable for convoy patrol below. Brown most likely descended into the water with no visibility whatsoever. Other squadron members left by transferring out of the unit during these early days. Bored at the lack of contact with enemy fighters, Fred Scudday and Hiram Putnam transferred to a unit in Malta in early 1942, where daily action against German and Italian aircraft was almost certain.[102]

The squadron continued more convoy patrols throughout April from its operating location at Kirton-in-Lindsey. On 26 April, Carroll McColpin continued to lead from the front by becoming the first member of the unit to single-handedly destroy a German aircraft. The squadron moved south on 11 May to Biggin Hill, located much closer to the action in 11 Group.[103] At Biggin Hill, 133 got into a regular rhythm of combat operations as winter weather gave way to sunny days in May and into summer. The squadron began to fly more fighter sweeps for British bombers in France during these months, as there was no significant USAAF bomber presence yet in Britain. Escort fighters would often fly further south to refuel before launching on missions into France to extend their range and time with the bombers. This consideration became critical when more of the long-range B-17s and B-24s began arriving in Britain.

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[101] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 219.
[102] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 220–21.
[103] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 233.

Eleven new squadron members arrived in June 1942, including Don Blakeslee and Don Gentile, who became two of the more famous American pilots in the war.[104] The operations tempo was high during the summer, and encounters with German aircraft increased in frequency and intensity. More combat meant both victories and losses for the squadron, as the *Squadron History* described on 31 July: "Just before crossing the coast on the way back a number of FW 190's made their appearance. Combats followed in which 1 FW 190 was destroyed by P/O Baker, 1 FW 190 destroyed and 1 Me 109F damaged by P/O Taylor. Our casualties were not light—F/Lt King, P/O Harp and F/Sgt Eichar did not return."[105]

At the end of July, Don Blakeslee replaced Squadron Leader Thomas, who was moved and promoted to Wing Commander. Blakeslee had trained in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and had flown with two different squadrons before joining 133. After McColpin's success as one of the top Eagles earned him a ten-week trip to the United States to participate in a war bond drive, Blakeslee served as the acting commander and remained with the squadron through September. Blakeslee would later command the 335th Fighter Squadron and the 4th Fighter Group.[106]

As Number 133 pressed on through the summer, the squadron's pilots gained experience in fighting the Luftwaffe. One of the highlights came on 19 August 1942, when Blakeslee led the squadron to a remarkable performance in support of Operation Jubilee. The operation consisted of a 6,000-man invasion of France at Dieppe for reconnaissance, meant to test Allied maritime capabilities and assess the German reaction to a landing on the continent. All three Eagle Squadrons supported the mission, and 133 proved that it had gained significant expertise in the previous months of training. The squadron flew four separate missions that day; the description in the unit history opened excitedly: "Every dog has his day—and on the 19th August No. 133 was the Dog!"[107] Blakeslee, Baker, and Alexander teamed up for 2 FW 190s and another probably destroyed during the first mission. On the second flight, Blakeslee, Brettell, Beaty, Wright, Gentile, Baker, Doorly, and Gudmundsen combined for 1 Ju 88 and 2 FW 190s

[104] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 236.
[105] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 251.
[106] Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons*, 77–79.
[107] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 255.

destroyed and 4 FW 190s and 3 Do 217s damaged. Next, Nelson, Alexander, and Blakeslee added a Do 217 destroyed, and another damaged along with an FW 190 damaged. The squadron escorted the returning Allied convoy on the fourth mission of the day, with no enemy aircraft encountered. In all, Number 133 combined for 6 enemy aircraft destroyed, 2 probably destroyed, and 8 damaged, for no losses.[108]

Pilot Richard "Dixie" Alexander, who scored an FW 190 and Do 217 destroyed and a Ju-88 damaged during his two missions that day in Operation Jubilee, described some of the morning action in more detail:

> We reached the target area and had just made a turn to port and were proceeding northward up the coast from Dieppe harbor, with Squadron Leader Blakeslee leading, when four FW 190's carrying bombs approached us from the north. They were at about 1,000 feet, and flew directly below us, heading for the ships in the harbor. Blakeslee immediately called them in and we broke down and after them. I was flying Red Four to Eric Doorley, and during the descent, Eric's acceleration was taking him away from me. He, in turn, was in hot pursuit of the others in the group. Suddenly I observed two more 190's to the left, and slightly below me. I closed on them, and fired one burst at long range. One of the 190's immediately jettisoned his bombs and flew inland; the other, however, proceeded toward the shipping. I was able to close to within about 3 or 4 hundred yards, and by then was well lined up. I gave him two more bursts, and we both passed directly over the entire convoy in the harbor, at about 300 feet. The 190 dropped his bomb; I have no idea where it hit. I was still firing, and observed good strikes on the fuselage, and on his port wing. Suddenly, his wing seemed to fall off, the aircraft exploded, and went directly into the water.[109]

The squadron deserved a win, and Number 133 had risen to its challenge in the air. It is a mission for which the unit's pilots were rightfully proud. From a strategic perspective, Operation Jubilee proved the Allies were nowhere near ready to launch a full-scale invasion of continental Europe. The intent of the operation was to rehearse an amphibious assault and test the enemy's reaction; the Wehrmacht responded with intense resistance. Regrettably, two-thirds of the raiders, who were mostly Canadian, were killed, wounded, or captured.[110] Yet, after working through challenges with pilot experience in its early months, punctuated by numerous aircraft losses, the pilots of 133

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[108] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 255–56.
[109] Richard L. Alexander, *The Called Me Dixie* (Hemet, California: Robinson Typographics, 1988), 98–99.
[110] Max Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45* (London: HarperPress, 2011), 326.

had trained hard to come through during a major operation that counted on continuous air support.

The Morlaix Mission

Five weeks after the squadron's success at Dieppe, James Goodson, Ray Fuchs, and William White arrived at Debden on 26 September 1942. As American volunteers, they had been transferred from a Canadian Squadron, where they had served throughout 1942.[111] Three years prior, Goodson had been on his way out of Europe and bound for America when his ship, the *Athenia,* was torpedoed by a German submarine on 3 September 1939. It was a life-altering event for Goodson, who was eighteen years old at the time. Many perished with the sinking vessel, but Goodson, who worked to save several other passengers, was miraculously rescued by a Norwegian ship. He decided he would join the RAF instead of returning to America after all.[112] He would later command the 336th Fighter Squadron in 1944.[113]

It was a cold, dark evening by the time Goodson and the others arrived at Number 133's new location at a satellite airfield near Debden, known as Great Sampford. The Eagle Squadrons had been dispersed to areas surrounding Debden for added defense from air attacks.[114] After dragging their gear into the officer barracks, they found no one there. There were no lights on, no sounds, no one around at all. Looking around, the new arrivals found nothing except lived-in but empty rooms. Some had photographs of girlfriends or wives on the desks. The men had an uneasy feeling that something was wrong. Their worst suspicions were confirmed when one pilot finally appeared and introduced himself as Don Gentile. "None of them came back," Gentile said, "They were escorting the first Fortress raid to Brest. There was a lot of cloud, and maybe the wind changed…On the way back they were already short of gas when they were bounced by Jerries. Then they couldn't get back across the Channel. I've heard Beaty made it back to the South Coast, but he's the only one…I guess you can take any room. They're all

[111] James A. Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 59.
[112] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds,* 13–33.
[113] Garry Fry and Jeffrey Ethell, *Escort to Berlin* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1980), 128.
[114] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds,* 60.

empty."[115] It was a stark welcome for Goodson, Fuchs, and White, the first new arrivals charged with rebuilding a squadron that had become all but extinct earlier in the day.

A variety of unfortunate factors came together to turn the mission to Morlaix on 26 September into a catastrophe for Number 133. Squadron Commander Carroll McColpin, who would normally have led the squadron that day, was in London being sworn into the USAAF as part of the administrative transition required of all officers to join American forces. He had left the squadron temporarily to Flight Lieutenant Edward Brettell, an Englishman who was a competent pilot, although not particularly popular with the Americans. Because the mission was supposed to be routine, only a few of the pilots had attended the morning briefing.[116] Twelve Spitfires from the squadron took off at 1350 "after a very sketchy briefing," with orders to rendezvous with a B-17 formation over the Channel.[117] After climbing through the weather, Brettell and the others found solid undercast clouds as far as they could see, which prevented them from spotting any visual references on the ground. They were unaware at the time, but the 35-mile-per-hour wind from the south that was briefed that morning was actually 100-miles-per-hour from the north at their flying altitude. The squadron orbited what they thought to be the Bay of Biscay area several times, yet unknowingly they were being pushed further and further south by the strong winds. The bombers were nowhere to be found. The British ground controller eventually instructed the squadron to try to overtake the bombers by proceeding south. After 45 minutes southbound, the pilots joined up with some B-17s they spotted coming back north.[118]

Based on timing, and extremely low on fuel, Brettell assumed he was near the British coastline and dove through a small gap in the clouds when he spotted land below. The entire squadron followed. Instead, the twelve pilots found themselves at low altitude in formation over the well-defended French port city of Brest. Anti-aircraft artillery immediately erupted from the ground, and German aircraft were also in the vicinity. Within minutes, Edward Brettell, George Sperry, Marion Jackson, Charles Cook, George Middleton, and Gilbert Wright were shot down. Each spent the rest of the war as

[115] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 61.
[116] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 267.
[117] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 267.
[118] Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons*, 29–30.

prisoners, except for Brettell, who was among the 50 prisoners murdered by the Germans following his role in helping to plan and execute the famous 'Great Escape' from the POW camp Stalag Luft III. William Baker, Gene Neville, Leonard Ryerson, and Dennis Smith all lost their lives when they were shot down or ran out of fuel. Richard Beaty was the only one to make it back to England, crash-landing on the English coast after he had turned back 50 minutes into the flight due to engine trouble. Robert Smith bailed out over France, but was able to evade after connecting with the French underground. He eventually returned to England, passing through Spain and uniting with squadron mate Eric Doorly, who had been shot down three weeks prior.[119]

The lessons learned from the Morlaix mission were bought at a steep price. Many of the squadron's most experienced pilots were lost along with twelve brand new Spitfire IX's on what became the last mission flown by Number 133. A variety of factors contributed to the fateful mission. More disciplined briefing procedures, a radio recall by British ground controllers, accurate weather reporting of winds aloft, and more experienced squadron leadership all could have played roles in averting the disaster.[120] Operational changes came about in the aftermath of the mission, but could never replace those who were lost. The closing statement in the squadron history reads simply, "No further operational flying during the month."[121]

The Legacy of Number 133 Squadron

The Morlaix mission was a bitter lesson in the elements of friction and chance that surround combat aviation and war itself.[122] Yet, an appreciation for the squadron's larger accomplishments through its founding, performance in combat, and symbolic meaning to the publics of both Britain and America places the event in perspective and honors the sacrifice of those courageous Airmen. Number 133 symbolized the commitment of Americans that exceeded the expectations of Roosevelt, Churchill, and the British people. The squadron was brought about for the purpose of defending Britain and came together in direct fulfillment of Churchill's political objectives. The RAF and those few American volunteers, like Andy Mamedoff, who came quickly to their aid,

[119] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 269.
[120] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 270–71.
[121] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 271.
[122] Clausewitz, *On War*, 89, 119.

assured British survival during the Battle of Britain. The Eagle Squadrons then rose to the challenge of maintaining British resistance in the war, fulfilling Churchill's second political objective. Churchill refused to allow his nation to submit to Hitler's aggression, and the Eagle Squadrons aligned the interests of Britain and America.

The moral support that existed within the United States was bolstered by the accomplishments of the Eagle Squadrons, reflected on the radio, in newspapers, and theaters. As America stood behind those heroes with increasing conviction, a growing relationship was forged between Roosevelt and Churchill. America lent the British her 'garden hose' in the form of Lend-Lease aid to fight the flames Hitler was fanning across Europe. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, America entered the war boldly and honorably, fulfilling Churchill's third and final political objective, and essential to victory in Europe. At a small airfield in frigid Northern Ireland, the members of Number 133 celebrated. In the words of pilot Richard Alexander, "We knew we had just gained a very powerful ally, and that in itself was reason to rejoice. We no longer stood alone."[123] The squadron continued to serve in the RAF for 10 months after America's entry into the war, and on 29 September 1942, the USAAF was finally ready to welcome Number 133 to its new home. Three days before that transitional event was to happen, four squadron members died and six were scattered across France, captured, and imprisoned. Yet, Number 133 Squadron did not die on that mission to Morlaix; its contributions to history were already momentous and only just beginning. The spirit of Number 133 would live on in the USAAF.

[123] Alexander, *The Called Me Dixie*, 69–70.

Chapter 2

The 336th Fighter Squadron in the USAAF

> *We of Fighter Command deeply regret this parting for in the course of the past 18 months, we have seen the stuff of which you are made and we could not ask for better companions with whom to see this fight through to a finish. It is with deep personal regret that I today say 'Goodbye' to you whom it has been my privilege to command. You joined us readily and of your own free will when our need was greatest. There are those of your number who are not here today—those sons of the United States who were first to give their lives for their country. We of the RAF no less than yourselves will always remember them with pride.*
>
> Air Chief Marshal Sir W. Sholto Douglas, RAF

The Eagle Squadrons transfer to the USAAF

On 29 September 1942, exactly four years after the appeasement of Hitler at Munich, the Allies were marching to a different tune. Officers from all three Eagle Squadrons joined at Debden for the official transition to the United States Army Air Forces. British Air Chief Marshal Sir W. Sholto Douglas and Major General Carl Spaatz, commander of Eighth Air Force, officiated the ceremony. Major Carroll McColpin and the remaining members of Number 133 represented the squadron with memories of Morlaix still fresh. The words of Squadron Leader George Brown in August 1941 that, "a year from now most of you will be dead," were prescient, if not quite mathematically accurate. A total of 244 American and 16 British pilots had served in the three Eagle Squadrons. Of that number, 108 Americans and five Englishmen would be killed during the war.[1]

On the day of the transfer, Carroll McColpin became the last commander of Number 133 in the RAF and the first commander of the 336th Fighter Squadron in the USAAF. It was a well-deserved honor for McColpin, the only pilot to fly combat in all three of the Eagle Squadrons, the first member of Number 133 to single-handedly destroy a German aircraft, an ace in 1941 in only five weeks' time, and a recipient of both the British and American Distinguished Flying Crosses. He commanded the 336th until December 1942, when he returned to the United States. McColpin later commanded the

[1] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 279–80.

404th Fighter Bomber Group, which he led back to England, France, and Belgium after D-Day. After the war, he continued his successful military career, commanding numerous fighter and air defense units, and retiring in 1968 as a major general and commander of 4th Air Force at Hampton Air Force Base, California.[2]

Lifting Spirits

As McColpin was preparing to return home, Don Blakeslee began to lead 336th missions more often, and worked to restore squadron morale after the transfer to the USAAF. Newcomer James Goodson described the general atmosphere at the time: "There was no enthusiasm on the part of the pilots. The loss of most of the squadron, the thought of flying with pilots we didn't know, the depressing facilities at Great Sampford, and the fact that we were stuck off there, while the other two Eagle Squadrons relaxed in the luxury of the main station at Debden, all combined to create an atmosphere of depression and cynicism. There was no *esprit de corps*; most of us had had to leave the squadrons we loved, and the few 133 survivors saw their squadron taken over by brash strangers. There was no enthusiasm or spirit; and, without these, no fighter squadron could survive. In short, we were not a true squadron, and we knew it."[3]

One October morning, Blakeslee concocted a plan to lift everyone's spirits: a formation takeoff with the entire squadron for an impromptu airshow over Debden, where the other two Eagle Squadrons were based. Normally, the Spitfires took off two at a time, or four together on the larger airfields. The small grass field at Great Sampford was not a place anyone would contemplate an entire squadron taking off simultaneously; anyone but Blakeslee. He drew up his scheme on the board in the briefing area and casually announced, "we'll form up this way on the east perimeter. When I give the signal, the squadron will take off in formation!"[4] After the shock of disbelief made its way around the room, Blakeslee hurried everyone out the door to their aircraft. After all the aircraft taxied into position, Blakeslee "brought his arm forward like John Wayne leading the U.S. Cavalry, flopped down into his seat, and started to roll."[5]

[2] Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons*, 277–78.
[3] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 63.
[4] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 64.
[5] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 64.

Flying in close formation, sixteen Spitfires cleared the perimeter fence by inches as they leapt into the early morning air and turned toward nearby Debden field. Pilots and crew chiefs were already out and about at Debden and witnessed the entire squadron rising up above the tree line and "sweeping across the middle of the base in perfect formation in a roar of sound which shattered the windows."[6] To them it was an impressive display of precision flying, yet in those planes the sweating and cursing pilots were working hard to maintain a perfect position. After flying over Debden again in even closer formation during the return to base, they split off to land at Great Sampford. Goodson recalled, "it was when we climbed out of the planes that I understood. There was excitement, enthusiasm, boasting, and pride. Everyone was babbling about how, against all odds, they faced and overcame catastrophe and gave a show fit for heroes. That evening Blakeslee wasn't the only 133 pilot with the belligerent swagger as we arrived in the officers' mess at Debden. It had become a squadron characteristic, and the other squadrons accepted it."[7]

Near the end of October, James Goodson and Richard Alexander came up with another creative way to make the 336th famous. After the transfer to the USAAF, there were still no American fighters to be found in Britain, so the RAF allowed the Eagle Squadrons to keep their beloved Spitfires. The squadrons painted U.S. stars over the British roundels, with the first two Spits to be repainted belonging to Goodson and Alexander. They came up with the idea of launching together on a low altitude mission referred to as a Rhubarb. A Rhubarb was typically executed by two or four aircraft flying low into France or Belgium to strafe shipping, rail transport, or any other significant ground targets they could find. It was usually accomplished on days with poor weather for operations at higher altitudes. They sold the idea to Blakeslee as the first U.S.-only fighter mission to Europe; because their Spitfires had American stars on them now, that was technically the case. Blakeslee bought it and convinced the commander of VIII Fighter Command, General Monk Hunter, to approve the mission.[8]

[6] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 64.
[7] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 64.
[8] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 66.

The morning of 29 October 1942, Goodson and Alexander took off under a low deck of clouds and skimmed the Channel toward the French coastline. They hit the coast and flew up the canal leading to the town of Gravelines, strafing a few boats along the way. The flak opened up near the coast, but was mostly behind and high of their aircraft as they hugged the terrain and surface of the canals. Goodson led the formation east, passing over Dunkirk and firing on a large coal barge in the canal, and the pilots finished by strafing a pair of steam engines in a large railway marshalling yard on the south side of Bruges, dodging flak throughout the attack. The duo then headed northwest and crossed back over Channel after having spent fifteen minutes over land.[9] They debriefed a standard mission report to the intelligence officer. The 4th Fighter Group operational diary simply noted, "Two 336 kites were off to Knocke, Belgium, on a Rhubarb from 1435 to 1610 hours, attacking barges in a canal."[10]

The two pilots considered the flight as more of a routine mission than a daring raid, but the newly arrived public relations corps at Debden had a field day with the story. *The Stars and Stripes* and other newspapers trumpeted claims that "read as if thousands of planes had spread destruction and fear throughout northern Europe, leaving the transportation system in disarray, and Hitler himself chewing the carpet."[11] Blakeslee, who would not tolerate any exaggeration in mission reports, was initially furious when he read the overblown press reports. He calmed down when he realized the story was not coming from Goodson and Alexander, who had honestly reported their results after the flight. Furthermore, he saw that the mission helped build up squadron morale and pride at a time when it was badly needed.[12] Thanks to the widespread publicity garnered by 'the first U.S.-only fighter mission in France and Belgium,' the 336th was already well on its way to becoming world famous.

The spirit of the 336th was rejuvenated when the squadron returned to Debden the next day on 30 October, performing a fly-by for good measure prior to landing. The pilots moved into their new quarters in the Debden mess, and the 4th Fighter Group was

[9] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 66–67.
[10] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 3.
[11] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 68.
[12] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 66–69.

unified for the first time.[13] Debden would be their primary home for the remainder of the war. The field was in Essex County, 45 miles north of London and 15 miles south of Cambridge. The squadron's wartime accommodations were excellent by any standard; on the field were "steam-heated brick buildings, tennis and squash courts, [a] billiard room, napkin rings, flowers, waitresses, civilian orderlies called batmen, and RAF silverware. Debden also had its own chicken farm."[14] The population of the 4th Group consisted of 1,500 officers and enlisted personnel as well as a detachment of newspaper correspondents.[15]

After the transition to the USAAF, the 336th immediately became one of only three combat-ready American fighter squadrons in Europe, making up the 4th Fighter Group. It is ironic that many of these airmen, deemed unfit for the air service in the United States for a variety of reasons, became the premier combat-experienced fighter pilots in the USAAF in late 1942.[16] Some had lacked the required education level. Others lacked 20/20 vision. A few lacked discipline and respect for authority. Some were idealistic, others fatalistic. More than a few simply wanted to fly fast airplanes. Regardless of the reason, they had given the British and now the USAAF the gift of their service, and some, the gift of their lives. The value of the experience these pilots and aircraft maintainers brought to the USAAF should not be underestimated. At a time when America was greatly in need of good pilots, maintainers, and equipment, the 336th readily supplied them. When General Hunter later handed over VIII Fighter Command to Major General William Kepner in August 1943, he remarked to the men of the Fourth, "I came here when the first group of you were transferred…You will never know what it meant to us to receive a group of fully trained operational pilots. It has formed a nucleus around which we have built our fighting machine."[17]

U.S. Politics in 1942

Ever since his meeting with Winston Churchill at Argentia in August 1941, President Roosevelt had settled on a strategy of Germany First. He knew that America's

[13] Alexander, *The Called Me Dixie*, 113.
[14] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History 1942-1986, p.12, IRIS No. 01070685, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[15] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History 1942-1986, p.12, IRIS No. 01070685, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[16] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 333–34.
[17] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 72.

enduring interests were in Europe, and his strategy reflected that continuing pursuit. After Pearl Harbor, however, domestic pressure challenged the president to act first against Japan. Rather than asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany and Italy, Roosevelt requested that Congress simply recognize the state of war that already existed. His intent was to avoid an open debate about whether the first efforts should be devoted to Europe or the Pacific.[18] Yet, the Germany First strategy also required marshalling public support, a massive undertaking that included war bond campaigns, public gift programs such as Bundles for Britain, and rationing.[19] 336th commander Carroll McColpin served just such a political role when he returned to the U.S. in June 1942 for ten weeks, fresh from combat with the Germans, to participate in a war bond drive.[20] The media stir created by Alexander and Goodson's U.S.-only fighter mission to Europe also yielded sought-after evidence of combat success in Europe, which sent a message to the American public. It was proof that the nation was achieving results against Hitler, for prolonged inaction in Europe could have lent more weight to arguments to shift resources to the Pacific. The early successes of the squadron aligned with and strengthened the president's objective.

Military unity of command depended on Allied political unity as well. Rather than officiating disagreements between military commanders, Roosevelt and Churchill approved the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee (CCSC), a military council that met in Washington to align Anglo-American strategy and logistics. The CCSC's success was fostered by the personal relationship and cooperation between Roosevelt and Churchill.[21] Had these efforts not succeeded in uniting American and British strategies, the members of Number 133 may have found themselves pulled from Northern Ireland and transferred to the Pacific in early 1942, a consideration about which many of the pilots had immediately inquired following the attack at Pearl Harbor.

Politics and Overall Strategy

Despite pressure from Stalin to open a second European front in 1942, FDR and Churchill came to agreement in June 1942 on an Allied invasion of North Africa.

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[18] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 125.
[19] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 128.
[20] Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons*, 277.
[21] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 130.

Operation TORCH, as it was named, was a strategic indirect approach to the European theater. It reflected Churchill's unwillingness to commit to a cross-Channel invasion of Europe without further preparation, but was enough to satisfy Roosevelt's desire to relieve pressure from the critical eastern front. FDR's intent was to remain militarily involved in Europe, even if indirectly, and not be drawn away entirely into the Pacific. He was determined not to turn away from Europe for political reasons, and was already looking ahead to America's leading role in post-war Europe. FDR also feared that Stalin, in a position of weakness in mid to late 1942, might give in to some sort of political settlement with Hitler. He trusted the ground invasion in Africa along with an increase in the air campaign from Britain would keep enough of the German army and air forces fixed to prevent a Soviet capitulation.

On the morning of 8 November 1942, sixty-five thousand Allied troops went ashore at Casablanca, two other locations on Morocco's Atlantic coast, and at Algiers and Oran on the Mediterranean coast of Algeria.[22] These forces, led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, overcame resistance from Vichy French troops, and quickly controlled the territory of these neighboring countries by 12 November. The Soviet Red Army also launched a successful counteroffensive at Stalingrad on 19 November, trapping some 250,000 troops from the German Sixth Army, whom Hitler had refused to withdraw at their earlier request.[23] The Russian success at Stalingrad would pressure the Anglo-American alliance to proceed with TORCH and quickly across the Mediterranean into Italy, as well as to finalize plans for the eventual continental invasion.

Meanwhile, USAAF leaders in Britain were wondering why many of their resources for striking directly at Germany from the air were being tied up in support of General Eisenhower's operations in North Africa. As of 10 October 1942, four fighter groups of the USAAF VIII Fighter Command were transferred to XII Fighter Command for Operation TORCH, leaving only the 4th Fighter Group in Britain. It was not until 8

[22] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 172.
[23] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 176.

April 1943, with the addition of the 56th and 78th Fighter Groups flying P-47s, that any other American fighters were consistently available in Europe.[24]

Roosevelt, Churchill, and Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French, met at Casablanca in January 1943. It was there during a press conference that FDR publicly clarified the Allied war aims against the Axis powers. The president stated, "the elimination of German, Japanese and Italian war power means the unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy, and Japan. That means a reasonable assurance of future world peace. It does not mean destruction of the population of Germany, Italy, or Japan but it does mean the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other people."[25] The policy of "unconditional surrender" made headlines around the world, and was deliberately set forth to bolster Allied morale, reassure Stalin that no separate peace with Hitler would be sought, and establish that Germany's defeat would be complete.[26]

Much of the air strategy in Europe was also finalized at Casablanca. Eighth Air Force commander, General Ira Eaker, delivered a presentation directly to Churchill and others, convincing them of the plan for round-the-clock bombing of Germany. The USAAF would conduct day raids, while the RAF would continue their night bombing campaign. Eaker also emphasized new aircraft, like the P-47, that would soon arrive in Britain to enable long-range bomber escort operations. After the conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued the Casablanca Directive, which described the aims of the Combined Bomber Offensive, and included the task, "to impose heavy losses on the German day fighter force."[27] The 336th Fighter Squadron's mission was clear.

New Commander, New Aircraft, New Missions, New Pilots

Major Oscar Coen commanded the 336th from 28 November 1942 until 3 March 1943.[28] He had trained in the RCAF, flown with Number 71 Squadron, and had already bailed out over France in October 1941; Coen subsequently evaded through Spain to

[24] Wesley Craven and James Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II, Europe: TORCH to POINTBLANK, August 1942 to December 1943*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 231, 309.
[25] Smith, *FDR*, 567.
[26] Smith, *FDR*, 568.
[27] Conrad Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 33–34.
[28] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 128.

Gibraltar, where he was picked up and returned to his unit on New Year's Eve.[29] He then led the squadron through several months of convoy patrol, during which they moved their Spitfires east to Martlesham Heath for faster access to the water.

The final period of convoy patrol reflected the ongoing state of maritime crisis in the Battle of the Atlantic. Merchant vessels sunk in February and March 1943 were near an all-time high, and the Germans operated 212 U-boats in the Atlantic. FDR became personally involved following a request for more assistance from Churchill, and directly ordered Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest King to transfer sixty B-24 Liberators from the Pacific to the Atlantic immediately.[30] With the addition of more bombers from the Pacific and new P-47s arriving daily, the squadron's maritime patrol duties ended abruptly. The role was more suited to short-range fighters that lacked the range to reach Germany. The 336th flew their last convoy escort mission on 1 April 1943 and transferred back to Debden to begin P-47 transition training.

James Goodson was the first squadron member to fly the Thunderbolt, and unlike many of the pilots who regretted leaving the Spitfire for a much larger and less nimble aircraft, Goodson appreciated the P-47 for its extended range and high-speed dive capabilities. He was chosen to work with the Air Technical Service, which was working to develop droppable external fuel tanks, a crucial innovation that extended the combat radius of the P-47 from 280 miles to 575 miles.[31]

The value of the drop tanks was immediately proven in combat. For months, the limited range of the Spitfires and P-47s without tanks prevented escorting the B-17s and B-24s beyond targets in France, Belgium, and Holland. Before operating with tanks, the Fourth would often fly from Debden south to Woodridge Strip, on the Channel, to land and top off their tanks for maximum range before taking off again on an escort mission.[32] According to Don Gentile, "the Luftwaffe just waited for the bombers to go past our sphere of action. Then they hit and didn't stop hitting until our bombers were back with us."[33] The addition of drop tanks reduced the total period of bomber vulnerability and

[29] Caine, *The RAF Eagle Squadrons,* 114–16.
[30] Smith, *FDR*, 571.
[31] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 70.
[32] John T. Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1958), 73.
[33] Don S. Gentile, *One-Man Air Force* (New York: L.B. Fischer Publishing Corp., 1944), 16.

surprised many of the German fighter pilots when they were first introduced. On 28 July 1943, the Fourth flew a P-47 escort mission into Germany for the first time, enabled by the new tanks. The group provided withdrawal support for the First Bomb Wing and met the bombers about 260 miles out from the English coast, where they caught 60 Me 109s and FW 190s by surprise. These fighters were at work on the bombers and caught completely unaware by the extended range of the P-47s. During a 25-minute dogfight from Germany back into the Netherlands, the pilots of the Fourth downed nine enemy fighters. The 336th claimed four kills; Lee Gover got an FW 190, Edward Anderson claimed two, and Carl Miley scored an Me 109. Unfortunately, Henry Ayres became a POW after he was forced to bail out over Belgium.[34]

While Britain welcomed the daily arrival of more American bombers through 1943, the 336th welcomed more new pilots to the squadron, including John Godfrey and his good friend Bob Richards. Godfrey had trained in the RCAF to bypass the college education requirement of the USAAF. During his training in Canada, he learned that his brother Reggie, who had enlisted in the Civilian Technical Corps, was killed when his ship was torpedoed off the coast of Greenland while on its way to England.[35] The new arrivals showed up in September 1943 and introduced themselves to the squadron commander, Major Carl Miley. Godfrey was a natural and an aggressive pilot who was willing to take risks. At the end of November, he paid his crew chief two pounds to paint a new aircraft name in front of the canopy: *Reggie's Reply*.[36]

Godfrey's first kill came on 1 December 1943, his first mission flown with the new paint job honoring his brother. Godfrey split from the formation to descend alone in pursuit of an Me 109, shooting it down.[37] In doing so, he descended below 19,000 feet, the cutoff altitude below which pilots were not to descend to chase after aircraft at lower altitudes. The incident earned him a reprimand from the group commander, Colonel Chesley Peterson, who first congratulated him but also emphasized that he had acted rashly: "Lieutenant, I want to tell you this in private, so as not to embarrass you in front of your friends. I want all my pilots to finish their tours. What you did today was very

[34] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 22, 132, 156.
[35] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 22–23.
[36] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 78–79.
[37] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 31.

foolhardy and risky; for this reason I cannot condone it. In the future stay with the group and if you want to go on a bounce, make sure that somebody is with you."[38] Godfrey was assigned as wingman to Don Gentile, who had four kills to his credit and was one of the most respected pilots in the squadron. Godfrey later wrote, "I found in Don Gentile a section leader who knew my capabilities and had faith in my eyesight. He was aggressive, which I liked but having had so much more experience, he served as a check to my recklessness."[39] Gentile and Godfrey would become a legendary team.

Political Visions and Military Objectives

The conflict in North Africa dragged on longer than Roosevelt expected, but the Allies had fought through the last Italian and German resistance in Tunisia by 13 May 1943. Churchill met FDR the same month in Washington to determine the war's next strategic turn. Churchill and the British chiefs argued the main effort should proceed through Sicily and Italy to strike Germany from the south. FDR continued to support a cross-Channel attack from Britain, minimizing efforts in the Mediterranean. Two weeks of debate produced a compromise: a combined move into Italy using ground forces already committed to the Mediterranean, and a simultaneous buildup in Britain for a cross-Channel attack planned for 1 May 1944, eventually codenamed Overlord.[40] VIII Fighter Command's objective of destroying the Luftwaffe now had a deadline. The main effort of the fighters and bombers would be directed toward the German air force in preparation for Overlord.

FDR again met with Churchill on 17 August at Quebec City, following the successful capture of Sicily by General Bernard Montgomery's Eighth Army and General George S. Patton's Seventh Army. Here, Roosevelt balanced the rhetoric of unconditional surrender with the need to secure the cooperation of the Italian population after Allied control of the peninsula was secured. He told Churchill privately, "we should come as close to unconditional surrender as we can, followed by good treatment of the Italian populace."[41] The two agreed to an armistice deal with senior Italian military officer Marshal Badoglio on 3 September, whereupon Italy switched sides and declared

[38] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 93.
[39] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 93.
[40] Smith, *FDR*, 573–74.
[41] Smith, *FDR*, 576.

war on Germany. Hitler immediately countered by sending sixteen experienced divisions into Italy and reinstalling Mussolini to political power.[42] The Allies would be forced to fight their way up the peninsula the hard way.

The meeting of the Big Three in the Soviet Embassy at Teheran in November 1943 established the final contours of Allied military strategy in Europe. Each leader understood the major issues in concluding the conflict were political, and Stalin had not even brought his military staff with him.[43] At Teheran, FDR finally laid to rest Churchill's nagging efforts to maintain the major line of effort in the Mediterranean and Balkans, which favored British interests. Stalin had been asking for a true second front in Europe since late 1941, and stated flatly, "if we are here to discuss military matters, Russia is only interested in Overlord."[44] FDR needed to gain a military presence on the continent to secure a leading role in the post-war Europe. The cross-Channel invasion would proceed as planned; Stalin pledged a simultaneous Soviet offensive in the East.

FDR also took advantage of the opportunity at Teheran to forge a more personal relationship with Stalin. At the end of an evening of dining and numerous toasts among the three leaders, Stalin proposed one final toast to the president: "I want to tell you from the Russian point of view, what the President and the United States have done to win the war. The most important thing in this war are machines. The United States has proven it can turn out 10,000 airplanes a month. Russia can turn out at most 3,000 airplanes a month. The United States is a country of machines. Without the use of those machines, through Lend-Lease we would lose this war."[45]

More Competition, More Machines, More Range

On 14 January 1944, the 4th Fighter Group launched three squadrons of America's great machines of war. The P-47s were under radar control over France at 25,000 feet when Don Gentile spotted a group of 15 FW 190's. Gentile was section lead, with Godfrey on his wing. Instinctively turning into the enemy fighters, Gentile flew directly toward a pair of 190's, who broke away in the same direction and proceeded to dive toward the surface. By breaking away before merging with the P-47, the 190's

[42] Smith, *FDR*, 577.
[43] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 239.
[44] Smith, *FDR*, 592.
[45] Smith, *FDR*, 594–95.

immediately yielded the advantage to Gentile, who followed them down. The move resulted in a psychological advantage for Gentile. As he described it, "they broke together to keep their formation, and I knew they were afraid of me and that I was going to kill them."[46] Using the P-47's superior diving speed, Gentile closed on both aircraft and shot them down sequentially, sending one crashing into a field and the other splintering into the adjacent forest.[47] Meanwhile, Godfrey had broken away to respond to another German fighter that was closing in on the pair. Gentile, out of ammunition after his two kills and skimming only 50 feet above the treetops without a wingman, was then bounced by another FW 190. For fifteen grueling minutes, Gentile foiled the enemy pilot's gun attacks in a battle of twisting and turning into his adversary. He repeatedly dodged tracers arcing toward his canopy until the German pilot finally ran out of ammunition and turned back to the East. Completely exhausted, but happy enough to "find a cloud and get out and dance on it," Gentile climbed to rejoin the group.[48] In addition to surviving the attacks of the most skillful adversary he had ever encountered, Gentile had destroyed two more German fighters and was officially an ace.[49]

As Gentile demonstrated that day, fighter aviation is about confidence, skill, and aggressiveness. Many experienced pilots knew that aggressiveness was the best defense, especially when outnumbered. At the tactical level, a mission ultimately came down to killing and surviving. After being promoted to Colonel, Don Blakeslee took over the 4th Fighter Group on 1 January 1944, and was determined to instill a fighting spirit in his pilots. Godfrey remembered his first briefing taking command: "the Fourth Fighter Group is going to be the top fighter group in the Eighth Air Force. We are here to fight. To those who don't believe me I would suggest transferring to another group."[50] From Godfrey's perspective, some of the younger and more aggressive pilots had "jolted the complacency of the more experienced pilots."[51] The altitude restriction of 19,000 feet for intercepts also gave way to aggressive pursuits down to the surface, assuming coverage for the bombers could also be maintained up high.

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[46] Gentile, *One-Man Air Force*, 39.
[47] Gentile, *One-Man Air Force*, 39–41.
[48] Gentile, *One-Man Air Force*, 48.
[49] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 35.
[50] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 92.
[51] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 94.

Godfrey's viewpoint must also be weighed with the oversight of senior officers like Air Chief Marshal Portal and General Bill Kepner of VIII Fighter Command. On 3 December 1943, Portal had stated that Operation Pointblank (the combined bomber offensive) was three months behind schedule.[52] Accordingly, Kepner began to cautiously authorize more aggressive tactics to increase the rate at which the Luftwaffe was degraded.[53] He balanced available bomber protection with increasingly aggressive fighter tactics intentionally. For example, after fighters were caught escorting the bombers too closely, they began to spread out and fly sweeps in wider line abreast formations to maximize visual lookout. The fighters also began to pursue German aircraft back to their bases. When the Luftwaffe did not meet them in the air, they dropped down to low altitude to strafe the airfields, one of the most dangerous tactics due to the higher risk from enemy flak. Kepner's objective was to achieve enough attrition in the Luftwaffe to secure air superiority in western Europe in time for Overlord.

The media presence at Debden and other bases, combined with the necessity of score-keeping, also contributed to an atmosphere of competition. There was competition among the pilots in the 336th, with Gentile carrying a slim lead in the scoring in March 1944. Gentile and Duane Beeson of the 334th competed for the honor of leading ace in the group. Each pilot was also chasing Eddie Rickenbacker's famous total of 26 kills in the First World War. Gentile and Beeson were tied with 15 kills each by the end of the day on 18 March. Media coverage added publicity to the score-keeping among the various fighter groups in the command. On 19 March, *The New York Times* reported, "An Eighth Air Force group commanded by Col. Don Blakeslee has destroyed 212 ½ German planes to become the second U.S. fighter outfit in the European Theater to pass the 200 mark."[54] The leading group inferred in the article was Colonel Zemke's Wolfpack, the 56th Fighter Group, which flew P-47s. The rivalry between the two groups was real, yet was overplayed by the media.

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[52] Wesley Craven and James Cate, *The Army Air Forces In World War II, Europe: ARGUMENT to V-E Day, January 1944 to May 1945*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 715.
[53] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 83.
[54] Grover C. Hall Jr., *1,000 Destroyed: The Life & Times of the 4th Fighter Group* (Montgomery, AL: Brown Printing Co., 1946), 141–42.

Over the next several months the squadron shifted toward a more offensive mindset in fighting the Luftwaffe, first in P-47s and then in P-51s. The new Mustangs arrived during Big Week, the six-day operation in late February 1944 that targeted twenty thousand tons of bombs at German aircraft production facilities.[55] Degrading the Luftwaffe remained the primary objective of the CBO. It was to be accomplished by bombing aircraft production facilities and destroying the German fighters that rose to defend those targets. During Big Week, squadron pilots flew combat missions and then returned to Debden for training flights in the P-51 the same day. Because no pauses could be taken due to the increased operations tempo, Blakeslee had promised General Kepner a transition to P-51s within 24 hours. True to his word, the Fourth launched its first mission in the Mustang within one day of receiving them, after some of the pilots had flown the aircraft for only thirty minutes.[56] James Goodson led the first 336th mission in the P-51 on 29 February, which was uneventful other than the maintenance issues that caused several of the pilots to turn back early. After working through significant problems with the new P-51s, including engine and propeller troubles, glycol leaks, and auxiliary tank feeding issues, the pilots of the 336th proceeded to put their new machines to work. 108-gallon drop tanks eventually extended the Mustang's combat radius beyond an incredible 750 miles, and the fighters could finally achieve complete escort of the B-17s to targets deep in German territory.[57]

On 3 March, Blakeslee led the group on its first mission to Berlin, which became a significant event for the 336th. The group rendezvoused with a formation of B-17s and B-24s, which soon turned back early due to weather, along with most of their fighter escorts. Half of the 336th, the eight aircraft led by squadron commander Gilbert Halsey, were already out of radio range to hear the recall, and proceeded on to Berlin completely alone. Godfrey remembered, "we had flown through a light cloud formation and run smack into the entire Luftwaffe…sixty German fighters…I can't say they bounced us, for the word is not descriptive enough; they just poured on us."[58] The fighters had been launched to intercept the inbound bombers, but found only eight fighters from the 336th

[55] Kimball, *Forged in War*, 257.
[56] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 82.
[57] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 71.
[58] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 96–97.

to meet them instead. Godfrey spent the first several minutes of the fight weaving and diving to fend off numerous enemy attacks. Flying a wing position proved impossible in the ensuing melee. Gentile closed in and gunned two FW 190s, Kendall Carlson and Willard Millikan each got an ME-110, while Phillip Dunn and Vermont Garrison got two more apiece for a total of eight enemy fighters destroyed.[59] Godfrey eventually escaped the attack of an FW 190 by diving into the clouds and made his way home, waiting to hear the fate of his squadron mates upon landing. Not everyone from the squadron made it home. Glenn Herter was lured after a low German decoy fighter at the start of the fight and was never heard from again. Phillip Dunn got disoriented on his return and lost his radio. He attempted to make it to the border of Spain, but had to bail out eight miles short of it in France and was captured. After logging two kills, Vermont Garrison was hit by flak while crossing the coast on the way home and was captured after he bailed out. Garrison, who was already an ace at that point, would rejoin the squadron after the war and later go on to be a double jet-ace in Korea with the 335th Fighter Squadron. Despite these losses, it was a respectable display of the skill and fighting spirit of the 336th. The *Stars and Stripes* headline on 5 March read, "Five of Eight Mustangs Survive Battle with Sixty Germans."[60]

Loss and Renewal

The next day, Bob Richards took off on Godfrey's wing; the squadron was again bound for Berlin. As they crossed the Channel with sixteen aircraft from the squadron, Bob called Godfrey, "Hello, Shirt Blue Red Leader, this is Red Two. My motor's acting up, am returning to base."[61] Those were the last words anyone would hear from Lt Richards. Godfrey was devastated when he got the news after returning from Berlin. The two had marched in step since meeting during pilot training in New Brunswick, Canada in June 1942, and the news hit him hard. He attended Richards' funeral on 7 March, along with the squadron commander, Major James Goodson, Richards' crew chief, Larry, and several others. The American cemetery near Cambridge was about twenty miles from Debden, and the group paid their respects during a short ceremony.

[59] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 135.
[60] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 97.
[61] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 99.

Burial services were on a tight schedule at the chapel, and upon being carried out, Richards' coffin was immediately replaced by that of another brave Airman who had paid the ultimate price. "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust…" the chaplain said as the coffin was lowered into the ground.[62] One wonders how many times he uttered the phrase.

Since the earliest days of Number 133 Squadron, the unit had navigated staggering losses alongside seasons of renewal. In the process, the squadron began taking on a character of its own, made up of the many individuals who had known its camaraderie, its great successes, and even some magnificent failures. Every Airman contributed to the squadron's proud spirit, which carried on through the odyssey of the war. For the pilots, the experience of death became a matter of proximity. Even the losses of other pilots in the group did not hit as close to home as deaths within the squadron. The prevailing mindset among these aviators was that it could only happen to someone else. A certain distance had to be maintained from thoughts of death. To hold on to a fighting spirit, one could not become preoccupied with the potential of dying; yet, death's existence could not be utterly disregarded during combat, for there is a fine line between courage and rashness.[63]

The day after attending the funeral, Godfrey had sufficiently distanced himself from the loss of his close friend and again took to the skies over Berlin in *Reggie's Reply*, flying on Gentile's wing. Maintenance issues with the new Merlin engines had plagued the squadron, and only four of the sixteen aircraft made it all the way to Berlin. Those four relieved the previous escort of P-47s, and soon engaged more than sixty Luftwaffe fighters attacking the B-17s. In a classic team fight that maximized mutual support and firepower, Gentile and Godfrey combined for six kills, making Godfrey an ace and bringing Gentile's total to 14. For their heroic actions that day, Gentile was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Godfrey the Silver Star.[64] During the mission, Lt Col

[62] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 104.
[63] NE II.1108b15 – 1109a20. "when compared to the mean, some extremes appear to have a certain similarity to it, as rashness does when compared to courage…" This work uses conventional notation for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, based on the following translation: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Reeve, C. D. C. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014).
[64] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 105–9.

Sel Edner, who had commanded the 336th briefly during December 1943, was shot down and became a POW for the remainder of the war.[65]

Three new squadron members, Don Patchen, Warren Johnson, and Don Emerson, arrived to join the 336th on 10 March 1944 in part of the ongoing process of squadron renewal. Only two years prior, Emerson had been a civilian at the movie theater in Chicago watching "A Yank in the RAF" and dreaming of flying in combat. He enlisted in the Army in 1942, was selected as a USAAF aviation cadet, and underwent fighter training in the P-51B in Florida before finally arriving at the 336th. These new pilots were among the first in the squadron who did not have a set of RAF pilot wings on the right chest of their uniform in addition to USAAF wings on the left. Even 18 months after the Eagle Squadron had transitioned, most of its members had been trained in the RAF or RCAF. Nevertheless, Emerson wrote home, "we were given a very hearty welcome when we got here and they made us feel right at home."[66]

Increased Action and the Pressure to Perform

In March and April of 1944, the 4th Fighter Group destroyed more than twice as many German aircraft as it had in the previous two years combined. Gentile alone shot down fifteen German aircraft from 3 March to 1 April. After several trips to Berlin, the group was starting to have a harder time finding German fighters airborne, and more often began to strafe them on the ground at aerodromes across France and Germany. The Eighth Air Force elected to attribute enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground to a pilot's kill total, equivalent to aerial victories. 5 April became a milestone day for Gentile, when he broke Eddie Rickenbacker's WWI record of 26 kills.[67] That day, Gentile claimed 5 kills on the ground after strafing a Luftwaffe aerodrome, for a record-breaking total of 27 kills and status as America's new leading ace.[68] After adding 3 more kills on 8 April, the *Associated Press* publicly hailed the accomplishments of the "Ohio Mustang pilot."[69] Two days later, General Eisenhower himself arrived at Debden, accompanied by General

[65] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 43.
[66] Merrill, *Donald's Story*, 144–47.
[67] The Eighth Air Force was the only numbered air force to include ground kills in a pilot's official total; the policy was later reversed by the Air Force, and the totals of pilots in the Eighth were adjusted to only the number of aerial victories.
[68] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 47.
[69] Hall, *1,000 Destroyed*, 173.

Carl Spaatz, Lieutenant General James Doolittle, Major General Kepner, and Brigadier General Auton. Eisenhower presented Distinguished Service Crosses to both Don Blakeslee and Don Gentile for their prior accomplishments, and jokingly referred to Gentile as "a one-man air force."[70]

Media organizations fought over exclusive rights to Gentile's story.[71] There was certainly political value in highlighting the accomplishments of America's top aces in Europe, but the constant pressure, media attention and obsession with score-keeping likely affected Gentile's judgment. On what was to be his last mission before well-deserved leave to the U.S., he made a low pass back at Debden prior to landing to put on a show for the cameras and crowds that by now were routinely gathered. The pass was too low, in fact, and Gentile hit a gentle rise in the grass field with the gear up, tearing into the grass with his propeller and fuselage. The aircraft bounced slightly, but he kept it under control and skidded to a stop, destroying the aircraft but suffering only bruises, a minor concussion, and wounded pride. Leading ace or not, Blakeslee was furious, and declared he would never fly again with the Fourth.[72] The *Associated Press* story generously claimed that "his plane lost power."[73] Still an American hero despite his instance of poor judgment, the twenty-three-year-old Gentile returned to the U.S. accompanied by Godfrey for a major Air Force Public Relations tour. The two met General Hap Arnold, members of Congress, and were on the Air Force campaign trail for most of the summer of 1944. Gentile remained in the United States, but Godfrey returned to Debden by summer's end and was back in combat again by 5 August.[74]

D-Day

Around the European theater, the Allies continued to make steady progress. In May 1944, 2.2 million German troops were fixed in the East to counter the possibility of a Russian advance, while front lines were still 560 miles from Berlin. The Anglo-American offensive in Italy proceeded northward; the Axis defense of Rome broke on 4

[70] Hall, *1,000 Destroyed*, 176–78.
[71] After the war, official Air Force records adjusted Gentile's total number of kills downward to 21.8, reflecting only his total number of aerial victories; even with the adjustment, Gentile led the 4th Fighter Group in WWII. Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 125.
[72] Hall, *1,000 Destroyed*, 186–87.
[73] Hall, *1,000 Destroyed*, 184.
[74] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 138.

June, and the Allies contented themselves with a stable Italian front north of Rome in order to pull U.S. and French divisions for the effort in Western Europe.[75]

Operation Overlord proceeded on 6 June as the largest combined military operation in history, with 12,000 aircraft supporting some 5,300 ships that carried 150,000 men and 1,500 tanks in the first wave.[76] The night prior at Debden, all crews reported to the hangars to paint black and white identification stripes around the fuselages and wings of their P-51s. These markings were to be painted on all Allied aircraft that flew that day to simplify visual recognition of friendly forces from the air as well as from the ground. Two bombs were also allocated for each aircraft. The pilots of the Fourth had rarely bombed in theater previously, but the focus of their missions would shift toward ground attack roles during the summer of the initial Allied advance from the West.

The 336th flew two missions on D-Day; the first was a relatively uneventful fighter patrol in the vicinity of Rouen, France, and the second a fighter bombing mission on which Oscar Lejeunesse and Harold Fredericks were both shot down by flak. Lejeunesse was captured, while Fredericks evaded capture to make it back to England. The ground attack mission was not only dangerous due to the immense amount of flak at low altitudes, but it divided the attention of the pilots between the ground situation and scanning the skies for enemy fighters. Regrettably, four pilots from the 335th were all killed on D-Day during their attack on a 20-truck convoy when they were simultaneously bounced by over fifteen Me 109s and FW 190s.[77] Despite these losses that were keenly felt in the 4th Fighter Group, the Allied air forces in total achieved a remarkable feat of air supremacy in protecting all of the Allied vessels and troops that day. During the previous five months, the squadron had sacrificed and put in much of the crucial work in defeating the Luftwaffe. From the beginning of 1944 through D-Day, the 336th Fighter Squadron lost 24 aircraft and 9 squadron members, many of whom were shot down by enemy flak and fighters. 13 of the remaining 15 pilots spent the remainder of the war in prison.[78] Yet during the same time period, the pilots of the 336th destroyed a total of 171

[75] Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45,* 527–36.
[76] Hastings, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45,* 533.
[77] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin,* 58–59.
[78] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin,* 156–61.

German aircraft, both in the air and on the ground, which represented almost half of the unit's total number of victories in the entire war.[79] The squadron's contribution to the overall Allied strategy leading up to D-Day was immense. According to the official USAAF history, "of all the accomplishments of the air forces, the attainment of air supremacy was the most significant, for it made possible the invasions of the continent."[80]

336th Fame Spreads Across Europe…Toasts with the Russians

Less than seven months after President Roosevelt and Stalin toasted America's war machines together at Teheran, and ten months before U.S. and Russian soldiers ever met at the small town of Strehla on the Elbe River in Germany, Don Blakeslee and the members of the 4th Fighter Group were drinking vodka toasts with Russian generals after landing their P-51s at Piryatin, Russia. The plan of shuttle bombing was first discussed in early 1944 and involved launching American bombers with fighter escorts from the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces to long-range targets in Eastern Germany and the Balkans, which would then proceed to land at airfields in Russia. From there, the aircraft would rearm and bomb German targets on the return flights. The Eighth Air Force planned a full circuit from England to Russia to Italy and back. Each Mustang pilot carried no less than 15 carefully marked and folded maps of various scales, covering the entire trip.[81]

Blakeslee delivered the mission briefing:

> Before we all get excited about it, I'll say the whole trip is about 7 ½ hours. We've done 'em that long before. We'll be throttled back…we could stay up for 8 hours…. On the way over—we will *not* do any fighting…you will not drop your belly tanks. If you're attacked—go into a turn. If for any reason you should have to drop tanks around Berlin—you've had it: You'll have to return here…. No one will take a gun. If you land with a gun—it's a death warrant. No guns at all. I don't know whether I'd even let them catch me with a knife. Too much like a weapon…. No one will abort because of lack of oxygen. You'll be at 15,000 feet. You don't need it. You have no business in this group if you

[79] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 133–46.
[80] Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 3:792.
[81] HQ 4th Fighter Group, Mission to Russia, p. 4, GP-4-HI(FTR), June 1944, IRIS No. 00077401, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.

> have to have oxygen at 15,000. If you get dizzy, go down under the bombers for a while.[82]

Forty-five Mustangs from the 4th Fighter Group took off on 21 June 1944 for the historic mission, accompanied by another squadron of P-51s from 352d Group. Blakeslee was well aware of the political nature of the shuttle bombing missions, and reminded the pilots in the group, "this whole thing is for show!"[83] The only significant event for the 336th during the trip to Russia was when crew chief SSgt Robert Gilbert, hitching a ride to Russia as a B-17 gunner, was forced to bail out after the bomber was hit. Gilbert subsequently fought against the Germans on the ground with Polish guerrillas for a month before returning to Debden in August.[84] The P-51s arrived at Piryatin within one minute of their ETA, and witnessed numerous flares coming up to mark their landing strip, which consisted of perforated metal strips laid down, with grass growing up in between them. After they landed, Russian GIs were cleaning their windshields before the propellers stopped moving. One pilot remarked, "when we left Russia we had the *cleanest* windshields in the world, for they never—and I mean never—quit cleaning the windshields, and that was their total maintenance."[85] On the night of their arrival, the Luftwaffe conducted a bombing raid that destroyed more than forty B-17s at a nearby airfield in Russia. Although the bombs fell on other locations, the pilots of the 336th slept in trenches that night. The Russians obviously did not have the air defensive system of Britain. The squadrons flew to Chingueue the next day to find a more defensible location. The five-day stay in Russia was marked by camaraderie among the troops, the sharing of food, beverages, and songs, and much confusion as to the exact location of the squadron members and their aircraft.[86]

After returning from Moscow, where he had been wined and dined and even made a radio broadcast to America, Blakeslee returned on 26 June to lead the Group to Lucera, Italy, located about 150 miles southeast of Rome. The Fourth joined fighters from Fifteenth Air Force there for several fighter sweep missions, and finally returned to the

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[82] HQ 4th Fighter Group, Mission to Russia, p. 3-4, GP-4-HI(FTR), June 1944, IRIS No. 00077401, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[83] Goodson, *Tumult in the Clouds*, 85.
[84] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 62.
[85] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 115.
[86] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 113–24.

relative luxury of Debden on 5 July, where they were welcomed home by Major General Kepner. The 16-day adventure covered 6,000 miles, 10 countries, and 10 aircraft destroyed for 7 lost.[87]

The shuttle mission to the Soviet Union accomplished much more than allowing the pilots of the 336th to trade Kentucky bourbon for Russian vodka. It fulfilled President Roosevelt's political objective of maintaining a commanding presence in Europe. The mission also demonstrated American leadership in the war and in the destruction of Germany's war-making capacity on the ground. It demonstrated to Nazi Germany that, in the famous words of FDR, "Hitler built a fortress around Europe, but he forgot to put a roof on it."[88] The undertaking also spoke the political language of power to Stalin and the Russian fighting forces, in the form of a remarkable visit from the pilots of the USAAF. Military operations can be influenced by political desires to communicate strategic messages to parties other than the primary adversary.[89] In addition to fostering military relationships between wartime allies, the Soviets were also a strategic audience to a demonstration of American military might. As the Cold War would later highlight, demonstrations of power were an important currency both during and after the more immediate conflict with Germany. In total, the shuttle missions were far from a complete success. German air raids destroyed USAAF bombers, and logistical difficulties coupled with political challenges ended the endeavor by September 1944. Yet, the squadron played a key role in the 8th Air Force's first mission, directly supporting the president's objectives. Through their efforts, the men of the 336th Fighter Squadron lent further credence to the toast that Stalin proposed to Roosevelt at Teheran.

Danger, Honor, and the Lessons of War

The Allied air forces broke the back of the Luftwaffe in the first half of 1944, but plenty of work remained as the squadron pursued Hitler's unconditional surrender. After their foray into bombing over the summer, the tactical fighters of 9th Air Force took over the fighter-bomber role, and the Fourth returned to escort missions and 'free-lance'

[87] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin,* 65.
[88] Grant, Rebecca, "Return of the Bomber: The Future of Long-Range Strike" (Air Force Association, February 2007), 7, https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a465958.pdf.
[89] Emile Simpson defined strategic audiences as "groups of people whom strategy seeks to convince of its narrative." He considered the concept as distinct from Clausewitz's notion of polarity—that strategic audiences were contained entirely within the two opposing sides. Simpson, *War from the Ground Up,* 62.

strafing. Major Frederick Glover took command of the 336th on 24 August 1944, and remained in charge through the end of the war in Europe until 2 June 1945. Leading the squadron for more than nine months, Glover was the longest-serving 336th commander in the war. He had arrived in the squadron back in February 1944, but had bailed out over France on 30 April after being hit by flak. Undeterred, he connected with the French resistance and made his way back to Debden by the end of May, where he immediately began flying again and took over the squadron two months later. After Oscar Coen's similar experience in 1941, Glover was the second 336th commander to have been shot down, only to evade and return to England and fly again. Glover was also a double-ace with 10.3 aerial victories and was awarded the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross.[90]

By August, German fighters were no longer showing themselves in the air as often, and the dangerous missions to strafe enemy aircraft on the ground continued. Most of the major aces in 8th Air Force that were shot down were lost during ground attack missions rather than aerial combat. Many experienced pilots strafed while flying so low that they were shooting level with their target. Regarding his own strafing technique, Don Blakeslee gave the following advice: "Once I hit the drome, I really get down on the deck. I don't mean five feet up; I mean so low the grass is brushing the bottom of the scoop."[91] This combat tactic was unknown and unpracticed by most of the newly trained pilots who were then arriving from America.

John Godfrey returned from his trip to the United States intent on setting new records. On 5 August, he scored three German aircraft on the ground and a single Me 109 in the air during his first combat mission in three months. The next day, he shot down an Me 410 twenty miles southeast of Berlin. He was quickly feeling confident in his abilities again, and began taking greater risks. On 24 August, Godfrey's fearless pursuit of victories caught up to him. On an escort mission to Germany, and seeing that no enemy fighters were threatening the bomber formation, Godfrey requested permission and broke free from the bombers to find more action on the ground. He and his rookie wingman, Lt Melvin Dickey, eventually spotted an enemy airfield with suitable targets,

[90] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin,* 188.
[91] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin,* 73–74.

eight Ju 52s sitting at the edge of the quiet strip. Godfrey destroyed one aircraft on his first pass, then went around for another, and another.

In the process of their strafing runs, the quiet airfield began to spring to life, and after five passes from each aircraft, gunners of every kind were manning their positions and taking aim at the two fighters. After one near miss from a flak burst, and another stream of machine gun fire that raked through the fuselage of his aircraft, Godfrey continued in for yet another strafing run to finish off the final aircraft on the ground. That final kill would be his last. He was hit yet again on the last pass and zoomed his crippled Mustang up to 1,500 feet before his engine gave a final cough and the aircraft began to lose altitude quickly. Godfrey ditched the plane into a small clearing several miles from the enemy airfield with only minor injuries, and remarkably was able to evade for five days. His intense thirst brought him out of hiding, where he was caught by a large German farmer with a pitchfork while desperately gulping water from a nearby stream.[92]

After 8 months in German captivity, and with much ingenuity, Godfrey escaped to link up with some American troops approaching from the western front. He returned to Debden before the war's end in April 1945, only to discover the tragic circumstances of his shootdown. Godfrey reviewed his own film followed by that of his wingman and discovered that on the final strafing pass the two had been aiming at the same target simultaneously. Godfrey was approaching the target from near the surface, while his inexperienced wingman turned in from a higher position and was following him much too closely to be firing as well. It is likely that Dickey had entirely lost track of his flight lead's position. When Godfrey pulled up and away after his final pass, his aircraft passed through his own wingman's gunfire, adding the final sting to his already damaged aircraft.[93] Lt Dickey's errors of losing his flight lead and fixating on the target were costly mistakes. He had been in combat for a mere three weeks at the time. After having spent the previous eight months imprisoned, Godfrey was understandably angry, but he also knew that he was fortunate to be alive.

[92] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 148–55.
[93] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 193–94.

John Godfrey was only twenty-three years old by the end of the war. He married and had two children, but was later diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) at the age of 34. Knowing that his days were numbered, Godfrey reflected on his wartime mentality with a new perspective, pondering what he had been trying to prove.[94] He was probably his own worst critic: "I…had forgotten the sole purpose of war. The *"Reggie's Reply"* written on my plane had become a mockery of my former purpose. So much had happened since I made that pledge to myself. Now it was no longer revenge I was seeking, nor was I fighting for the way of life which millions of Americans were struggling to protect. My battle was for my own personal glory. My one ambition was to be the top fighter pilot of the war. Where or how I lost my ideals I cannot say. Maybe it was the atmosphere of Debden, with its photographers and newsmen continually searching for heroes."[95]

The candor Godfrey showed later in life illuminates the pursuit of personal honor for its own sake as one of the temptations of warriors. Godfrey's reflection also offers evidence of the thin and perhaps unrecognizable line between courage and rashness in combat. It is a line that is drawn in different places by different individuals, and pushing past it is a vice that may become evident only in hindsight. These young pilots were forced to grapple with extremely high risks on a grand stage almost daily, and the pace of combat operations left little time for deep reflection about what it all meant. During the war, Godfrey was a fighter at a time when the nation needed fighters. He was a brilliant pilot that brought vitality and spirit to the squadron. Godfrey died of ALS on 12 June 1958 at the age of 36.

Hitler's Diversion: Political Problems and Operational Influences

The significance of the V-1 'flying bombs,' which resembled a highly inaccurate form of cruise missile, lay not in their military value, but in the political effects they created in Britain. The V-1s entered the war shortly after D-Day on 12 June 1944, and

[94] Klinkowitz also discussed Godfrey's mentality, and attributed much of his demeanor to the influences of the media and the environment of competition among the different fighter groups. Jerome Klinkowitz, *Yanks over Europe: American Flyers in World War II* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 52–53.
[95] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 123–24.

within the first three weeks, 2,752 people in Britain were killed.[96] One of the largest attacks in scale occurred from 1-8 July, when 820 V-1s were plotted on radar approaching England.[97] It was during that week, on 6 July, that Winston Churchill first addressed the House of Commons regarding the new weapons. His primary purposes were to communicate the efforts the Allies were taking against the V-1 launch sites, and to set the record straight about how much damage the weapons were actually causing. German propaganda had been exaggerating the effects of the V-1s, of which between 100 and 150 were being launched daily during the first week of July. As of 6 July, the number of fatal casualties sustained matched almost exactly the number of weapons launched, with 2,754 flying bombs to 2,752 fatalities in Britain. There were an additional 8,000 citizens detained in hospitals with injuries. Churchill felt that giving accurate information regarding the effects of the weapons outweighed any benefit the Germans might obtain, and that the rumors of more widespread effects were more harmful than accurately disclosing all of the facts.[98]

The V-1 attacks brought the violence of war directly to London, and generated some heated political discussion in the House of Commons that day. Regarding the nation's response, Churchill made his point clearly: "I do not want there to be any misunderstanding on this point—that we shall not allow the battle operations in Normandy or the attacks we are making against special targets in Germany to suffer. They come first, and we must fit our own domestic arrangements into the general scheme of war operations…. I am sure of one thing, that London will never be conquered and will never fail, and that her renown, triumphing over every ordeal, will long shine among men."[99] As Churchill attempted to steel the resolve of the House, not all members agreed. He had previously gone to the USAAF leadership to insist on new priorities for targeting the V-1 launch sites. Questions for the Prime Minister regarded the opening of London's deep shelters that were reserved for intense attacks, which was approved. Another member urged a public debate, which was dismissed to avoid the risk of

[96] Charles Eade, ed., *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 167.
[97] Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 3:532.
[98] Eade, *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, 3:167–72.
[99] Eade, *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, 3:175.

excessive public criticism. One member queried about reprisals, which were not discussed openly. Another suggested that saving people's lives "apparently…does not matter to some honorable members," to which Churchill replied, "the honorable gentleman has no right to suggest that other honorable members do not care about saving people's lives, or that he has any monopoly of human charity—or any marked pre-eminence in human genius."[100] Churchill followed up with the House on 25 July with a delineation of specific duties for the various government ministries and boards to aid in a holistic response under the Ministry of Home Security.

After the first V-1s began striking Britain, the destruction of the launch sites in France and the Low Countries immediately became a priority for the USAAF. On 16 June 1944, shortly after D-Day, General Eisenhower's office directed that V-1 launch sites "are to take first priority over everything except the urgent requirements of the battle."[101] While he recognized the serious nature of the threat, General Spaatz thought his heavy bombers were being wasted in attacks on the V-1 sites.[102] The V-weapon attacks induced a diversion of CBO efforts that presented challenges to the overall air strategy. Furthermore, the threat exposed a vulnerability that was not easily resolved. The RAF and USAAF went to great efforts to target the launch sites, which were often concealed and difficult to find. As Churchill pointed out to the House of Commons, the weight of bombs dropped on targets related to the V-weapons as of 6 July was approximately 50,000 tons.[103] Pilots from the 336th escorted bombers on numerous missions against the V-weapon launch sites, designated Operation Crossbow.

From Flying Bombs to Ballistic Missiles

On 8 September 1944, a 117-member launch team of Germany's 485th Artillery Battalion watched as the world's first inertially-guided ballistic missile burned through thousands of pounds of propellant as it lifted off the ground. The crew lost sight of the V-2 as it climbed to an altitude of 17 miles and accelerated to 3,500 miles per hour. The rocket was aimed at London, but its inherent imprecision meant that it would hit some point within a ten-mile radius of its target. That point turned out to be the small

[100] Eade, *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, 3:176–77.
[101] Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 3:527.
[102] Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil*, 117.
[103] Eade, *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, 3:169.

neighborhood of Chiswick in the western part of the British capital, where the V-2 hit at a speed of Mach 3. A second V-2 found North London two minutes later.[104] The weapons were terrifying and could strike with no warning whatsoever. Unlike the slower-moving V-1 cruise missile, which could be found on radar and was sometimes intercepted by defensive fighters, there was no defense against the V-2. Hitler's intent of influencing London's decision makers, retaliating against Britain's night bombing of German cities, and bolstering German morale through a variety of V-weapon propaganda fell short.[105] The outcome of the war in Europe was no longer in question late in 1944, so Hitler's ballistic missile strategy, intended to play a much larger role in devastating England and reversing the tide of war, amounted only to one of limited revenge.

At Debden, there were close calls with V-weapons on numerous occasions. There was an alert the night of 5 October 1944, when two weapons exploded nearby, and again on 12 and 13 October. The squadrons began to wonder if the airfield itself was being targeted. The first V-2 struck near the base on 14 December; then on the night of 21 March 1945, another V-2 hit very close to the airfield and six more of the ballistic missiles exploded within a 50-mile radius of Debden.[106] Fortunately, no damage was done to the base itself, but the knowledge that they could be struck again at any moment was something the personnel at Debden, as well as the general population, would have to endure.

The fortitude of the British civilian population that withstood the attacks during these final months of conflict also deserves recognition.[107] Between 8 September 1944 and 29 March 1945, the V-2s killed 2,500 more Londoners. Despite the high levels of effort from the air that certainly degraded the overall effort, the missile strikes continued both in Britain and other Allied locations in France and Belgium until the German launch positions on the ground were finally overrun by the 21st Army Group at the end of March 1945, putting a final end to the threat.[108] Operation Crossbow consumed 16 percent of

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[104] Matthew Brzezinski, *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries That Ignited the Space Age* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2007), 2–6.
[105] J. Patrick Anderson, "The Air Campaign vs. Ballistic Missiles: Seeking the Strategic Win in the 21st Century" (School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, 2017), 5.
[106] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 78–99.
[107] Craven and Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 3:546.
[108] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 582.

total bomb tonnage from the Allied strategic air forces between August 1943 and August 1944, and 6.8 percent of tonnage for the entire war.[109] Major lessons from Operation Crossbow included the inability of bombing efforts to completely halt missile launches, the difficulty of finding small, concealed targets, and finally, the effect that political pressure at home can have to directly determine wartime military resource allocation.[110] The pilots of the 336th Fighter Squadron served an important role in Operation Crossbow. They would become intimately familiar with the political considerations surrounding a mobile missile-hunting mission and encounter many of the same challenges forty-six years later in the desert of Iraq.

The Final Push

Following the capture of Colonel Zemke of the 56th Fighter Group, who had been forced to bail out after encountering poor weather, Don Blakeslee was grounded by the USAAF senior leadership in November 1944. VIII Fighter Command could ill afford to lose another famous group commander in combat and wanted to play it safe; Blakeslee subsequently returned to the U.S. on 19 November. The younger pilots in the group had begun to refer to the twenty-seven-year-old colonel by the nickname, 'Old Man River.' A hero of Number 133 and later of the 4th Fighter Group, Blakeslee had flown and fought in over 500 combat missions for three and a half years in the European theater and accumulated over 1,200 combat hours and 17 ½ enemy aircraft destroyed.[111] Debden would not be the same without his motivation and tireless drive to instill a fighting spirit in every pilot of the 4th Fighter Group.

The pilots of the 336th continued to press on through what became the final months of conflict in Europe. The Luftwaffe was gasping for air but not dead yet, which flavored every mission with uncertainty as to whether or not the enemy would show up to the fight. These last months may have been some of the most difficult for the morale of the squadron. Enemy contact was so infrequent that "the missions became tiresome exertions in which the pilots froze and dragged themselves across Germany in the overcast as targets for the heavy flak. Some pilots flew more than 100 combat hours

[109] Mark Kipphut, "Theater Missile Defense," *Airpower Journal* 10, no. 4 (Winter 96): 35–53.
[110] Kipphut, "Theater Missile Defense," 35-53.
[111] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 80–81.

without seeing anything that corresponded with the cardboard silhouettes of a 190 or 109."[112] The last months at Debden continued to deliver juxtaposed events that only wartime could bring. Don Emerson single handedly took on six FW 190s, shooting down two of them before being killed by ground fire at low altitude on his egress leg from Germany on 25 December 1944; at the same time, 300 British children danced around in a frozen fog that had crystallized on the field just in time for the children's Christmas party at Debden.[113] Those children had no reason to fear that day, thanks to the courageous efforts of men like Emerson.

In America, President Roosevelt was in deteriorating health, but the war had become his personal burden and he was determined to see it through to completion. In November 1944, he defeated Thomas E. Dewey to win an unprecedented fourth presidential term. Two days after his inauguration in January 1945, FDR departed for Yalta, on the Crimean Peninsula. This final conference of the Big Three convened on 4 February. By this point, the progression of the war had determined that most political decisions regarding the future of Europe were going to be dependent on military realities. The situation on the ground translated directly into political bargaining power in early 1945 Europe. The president had foreseen this all along, and for that reason had maintained his political focus on Europe while adapting the military's lines of effort to support that objective.[114]

By early February, Red Army troops had taken Warsaw, occupied East Prussia, and were fifty miles from Berlin. The Allies were approaching the Rhine River in the West. Poland was already entirely occupied by Soviet forces and under the administration of a Soviet government; it would become a Communist state as a security buffer for the Soviet Union. Germany would be divided among America, Britain, France and the USSR as occupying powers. Stalin agreed to FDR's proposal for voting procedures in the new United Nations Security Council, and in another victory for FDR, he also agreed to move against Japan within two to three months of Germany's surrender.[115] The president's bold response to the global challenges of the war secured

[112] Hall, *1,000 Destroyed*, 253.
[113] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 87.
[114] Smith, *FDR*, 629–31.
[115] Smith, *FDR*, 629–32.

victory for the Allies and established America's leading role in the international order that would follow. President Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945 knowing he had left the nation poised for victory. In a speech to the House of Commons on 17 April, Winston Churchill said, "For us, it remains only to say that in Franklin Roosevelt there died the greatest American friend we have ever known, and the greatest champion of freedom who has ever brought help and comfort from the new world to the old."[116]

The Death of the Luftwaffe, then Hitler

As the territory controlled by the German army in Europe continued to shrink, the Luftwaffe was forced to reposition and corral its available aircraft into fewer and more concentrated locations. By 1945, the Luftwaffe had long since begun to run out of sufficient numbers of pilots to fly its available aircraft. During these last months of the war, roving American fighter groups out on patrol might encounter a cache of parked German fighters at an opportune moment. Such instances resulted in strafing attacks that destroyed 28 Luftwaffe aircraft on 16 January and 43 aircraft on 27 February. Three weeks prior to the end of the war in Europe, the 4th Fighter Group destroyed a record-total of 105 aircraft on the ground in a single day while battling heavy flak at two different airfields on 16 April.[117] Several pilots in the 336th paid dearly for this finishing strike to the Luftwaffe, which first involved taking out the enemy flak emplacements at the airfields. Leroy Carpenter and Carl Alfred were killed, while William Ayer, Benjamin Griffin, Maurice Miller, and Edward Gimbel bailed out after their aircraft were hit with flak and became POWs for the brief remainder of the war. With many of the squadron's experienced pilots having already been killed, captured, or rotated back to the U.S., the squadron was relatively inexperienced. Four of the pilots shot down that day had only three to five months of experience in the squadron, and none had more than nine months.[118] This final effort by the pilots of the 336th, who destroyed 31 Luftwaffe aircraft that day, also had significance for the 4th Fighter Group. The group now had a total of 1,016 confirmed victories during the war, making it the highest scoring fighter group during the war in the entire USAAF.[119]

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[116] Eade, *The War Speeches of the Rt Hon Winston S. Churchill*, 3:418.
[117] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 91–103.
[118] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 168–69.
[119] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 127.

It is fitting that the 336th Fighter Squadron played a major role in the final push to finish Hitler's Luftwaffe that day. From its time as an Eagle Squadron, Number 133 represented the commitment of a small group of Americans to the cause of another nation. The original Eagle Squadron, Number 71, grew into a second, Number 121, and then a third, Number 133, a commitment that exceeded all expectations. The squadron fulfilled the political objectives of Britain in its time of greatest need, and simultaneously strengthened the bond between the British people and those back home in America. The airmen of 133 learned the hard lessons of combat aviation and of war together as they grew in their experience, camaraderie, skill, and fighting spirit. "Let us to the battle" was their cry. Indeed, the members of Number 133 found the battle and made their presence felt in Northern Ireland, at Biggin Hill, at Dieppe, France and elsewhere in those early RAF years.

After fulfilling Churchill's objectives for Britain, the squadron transferred to the USAAF and immediately became the nucleus around which the American fighter force in Europe was built. With their Spitfires on loan from Britain and combat-hardened pilots, the 336th directed its efforts toward the national strategy of Germany First. The squadron kept America militarily involved on the continent well before the Allies were prepared for a land invasion. The pilots of the 336th again found the battle, skimming the canals of France and Belgium in the first U.S.-only fighter mission to Europe, escorting B-17s into Germany, supporting strikes against enemy ballistic missile sites, and engaging countless Luftwaffe fighters in the air and on the ground. The spirit and skill of the 336th were evident in producing many of the Fourth's leading aces, like Godfrey, Goodson, Gentile, Glover, and Blakeslee. More importantly, the squadron's team mentality was essential in combat and welcoming to newcomers as it continually renewed its personnel along with its determination and will to win throughout the marathon of a war. As heroic individuals were led by experienced commanders, the squadron came to life and became a representation of their combined efforts, aimed toward achieving national objectives and defending the common good.[120]

[120] Valpiani united Aristotle's ethics and Clausewitz's concept of strategy to conclude, in part: "The *purpose* of war is to attain political ends consistent with just peace and the common good." James M. Valpiani, "In Defense of the Common Good: Strategy, Ethics, and the Responsibilities of Command" (School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, 2018), 88.

Hitler crumbled, knowing that his air and ground forces were utterly defeated and the Soviets were closing in on Berlin. Unwilling to face justice, he consumed cyanide then shot himself with a service pistol on the afternoon of 30 April 1945. On 2 May, after losing over 300,000 men in the final weeks of its push to the West, the Red Army seized Berlin.[121] With the triumph of the Allies in Europe, 'VE Day' was celebrated on 8 May. That day, all the P-51s in the group were grounded and their ammunition was unloaded. In a magnificent demonstration, a victory formation of 720 fighters from VIII Fighter Command flew over London and around southern England on 13 May. A Mustang from the 336th, repainted to represent John Godfrey's aircraft, *Reggie's Reply*, was flown to Paris in early July and parked on display directly underneath the Eiffel Tower. It was a well-deserved honor for the man who had destroyed more German aircraft than any other in the 4th Fighter Group. In England, Debden field was empty by the end of July. The war that had developed into somewhat of a lifestyle suddenly ceased to exist. Following Japan's surrender in August, most members of the group immediately left Britain, their wartime island home, and the final remnants returned to the United States in November. The 4th Fighter Group was deactivated on 10 November 1945;[122] the 336th Fighter Squadron had served its purpose well.

[121] Keegan, *The Second World War*, 528–33.
[122] Fry and Ethell, *Escort to Berlin*, 104–6.

Chapter 3

From the Cold War to the Hot Desert

The 4th Fighter Group was reactivated at Selfridge Field, Michigan in 1946, as the nation began to rearm amid Cold War pressures. The 336th Fighter Squadron officially became known as the "Rocketeers" while at Andrews Field, Maryland in 1947. The new name, which has endured for over 70 years to the present day, reflected the fact that the squadron had transitioned to its first jet, the F-80 Shooting Star.[1] The Rocketeers spent the summer blasting across the country in their new jets. On 4 July 1947, Captain Alex Melancon of the 336th set an unofficial speed record, flying from Mitchel Field, Long Island, to Andrews Field in twenty-four minutes and fifteen seconds, at an average speed of 562 miles per hour.[2] The squadron was also occupied with performing in numerous airshows up and down the east coast. The unit's new emblem was approved on 15 October 1947; it depicted a pilot in a rocket blasting off on a background of blue sky and white clouds. The squadron transitioned to the F-86 Sabre in March 1949, and later deployed to Korea in December 1950.

On 17 December 1950, the 336th squadron commander, Lt Col Bruce H. Hinton, shot down a MiG-15 aircraft during the first Sabre mission of the war. His flight spotted the MiGs just south of the Yalu River on the border of China, jettisoned their external fuel tanks, and dived to attack them. Firing 1,500 rounds of ammunition, Hinton downed the leader's wingman, but the remaining three MiGs escaped into China by outrunning the Sabres. During the Korean War, the 336th shot down 116.5 enemy aircraft,[3] helping to make the 4th Fighter Group again the leading group in the war.[4]

After defending South Korea from the Communist invasion until the armistice in July 1953, the Rocketeers moved to Japan and continued tours to Korea periodically. The squadron moved with the 4th Group to Seymour Johnson AFB in Goldsboro, North Carolina on 8 December 1957, and the wing was designated the 4th Tactical Fighter

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[1] Larry Davis, *The 4th Fighter Wing in the Korean War* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2001), 21–22.
[2] Davis, *The 4th Fighter Wing in the Korean War*, 20.
[3] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing Chronology, Dec 1966, p.36, IRIS No. 446861, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[4] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986 p.2, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.

Wing the following year. There, members of the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron flew F-100 Super Sabre aircraft for almost two years until transitioning to the F-105B and then the F-105D Thunderchief, which it flew from 1960 to 1966. The squadron also deployed with the wing to McCoy AFB, Florida, during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962.[5]

The Rocketeers made a significant transition to flying the squadron's first two-seat aircraft when it moved to the F-4D in 1967. The aircraft introduced a new crew position for an aircrew member in the rear cockpit, known as the weapon systems officer (WSO). Accordingly, the squadron's Rocket emblem was updated to add a second crewmember as well. Shortly after the transition to the F-4D, the squadron was deployed with the wing to the Korean peninsula again in early 1968 in response to North Korea's seizure of an American intelligence gathering ship, the *Pueblo*. The squadron was in Korea at Kunsan Air Base within a week of the incident in January 1968, and returned to Seymour Johnson AFB on 11 July. The 4th TFW Commander, Colonel Charles E. Yeager, said the following upon their return, "We engaged no enemy, shot down no aircraft and underwent no bombardment; but we moved an entire wing, planes, logistics supplies and personnel, 9,000 miles in a matter of days, establishing in Korea a responsive combat-ready strike force."[6]

After three months of training in 1970, the 336th transitioned to the F-4E, and became fully operational in the new aircraft on 17 July. Meanwhile in Vietnam, President Nixon's plan for "Vietnamization" was already underway as American ground forces continued to withdraw from the South. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese Defense Minister, launched a renewed conventional attack into South Vietnam on 30 March 1972, known as the Easter Offensive. With the number of American troops in Vietnam falling from 139,000 in January to only 69,000 in April, President Nixon turned to airpower to blunt the offensive. Operation Constant Guard doubled the number of F-4s between 30 March and 13 May to a total of 374 in-theater.[7] The Rocketeers were again called on and given minimal notice for a long-range

[5] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986 p.3-17, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[6] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986 p.22, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[7] Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 149–53.

deployment. The wing was alerted on 5 April 1972, and nine days later the squadron was flying combat sorties in Vietnam.[8] The wing's move to Ubon RTAFB, Thailand was only a small part of the Air Force's rapid power projection of a large and sustainable force that included bombers, fighters, airlift, and air refueling aircraft. This type of effort is now considered routine, but it was the first of its kind and has become a key element in America's strategic airpower arsenal.[9] The squadron deployed twice to Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, in support of Operation Constant Guard from 12 April to 30 September 1972, and again from 9 March to 11 September 1973. All three of the original Eagle Squadrons, the 334th, 335th, and 336th Tactical Fighter Squadrons rotated together to support operations in Vietnam during this period.

On 15 August 1972, Captains Frederick Sheffler and Mark Massen of the 336th recorded the wing's first and only MiG kill in the operation when they shot down a camouflaged MiG-21 with an AIM-7 radar-guided air-to-air missile. The two were later awarded the Silver Star.[10] Also notable from the squadron's one-year deployment was the service of Captain Thomas M. Griffin, who was awarded *two* Silver Stars for actions in Southeast Asia.[11] Sadly, Captain Samuel B. Cornelius of the 336th, and his WSO, Captain John J. Smallwood from the 58th Tactical Fighter Squadron, were killed after being downed by hostile ground fire while flying a Fast FAC mission over Cambodia on 16 June 1973.[12] The squadron's efforts helped reverse the Easter Offensive and inflict devastation on the North Vietnamese Army's conventional forces, aiding in President Nixon's diplomatic efforts to secure peace with honor and an American withdrawal from South Vietnam.

Following the Vietnam War, the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing returned to training and readiness operations for the next fifteen years. The fame of the Rocketeers continued to spread as short-term deployments were undertaken to Germany, Norway, Korea,

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[8] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986, p.23, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[9] Stephen Randolph, *Powerful and Brutal Weapons: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Easter Offensive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 114.
[10] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986, p.77-87, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[11] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986, p.97, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[12] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986, p.91, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.

Japan, and Denmark.[13] The 336th Fighter Squadron became the first fully operational F-15E Strike Eagle unit in the USAF in October 1989. The F-15E, which the 336th has now flown for almost thirty consecutive years, represented a significant technological improvement over the F-4E. The aircraft is a two-seat, supersonic, all-weather, dual-role fighter designed for both air-to-air and air-to-surface capabilities. At that time, the aircraft was equipped with Low-Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infrared (system) for Night (LANTIRN) pods that allowed low level automated terrain-following operations and day or night targeting with guided and unguided air-to-ground munitions. The Strike Eagle's APG-70 radar also provided capabilities to find and engage both air and surface targets. After initial training at Luke AFB in Arizona, two of the original Eagle Squadrons, the 335th Tactical Fighter Squadron, the "Chiefs," and the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron, the "Rockets," were the only operational squadrons in the F-15E in early 1990. Just as they had responded to the nation's calls in Korea and Vietnam, the Rockets remained a deterrent to aggression and were ready to be employed at a time and place of the nation's choosing. By that point, the Rockets had already become world-famous, and equipped with the Air Force's newest strike fighter, the squadron was ready for the next battle.

Politics of the Iraqi Invasion

At 8:20 pm on the evening of Wednesday, 1 August 1990, a concerned National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, interrupted President George H.W. Bush with the news of Iraq's invasion of neighboring Kuwait. "It's clear, they're across the border," Scowcroft said.[14] The dispute that had begun to escalate earlier that year had consisted mainly of saber-rattling over economic issues, but had now turned into outright aggression. Intelligence estimates confirmed Saddam Hussein's army had swept into Kuwait with a significant number of troops.[15] President Bush was surprised by the Iraqi leader's rash behavior, but he was not caught completely off guard. Since 25 July, the

[13] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing History, 1942-1986, p.3, IRIS No. 01070685, in the USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[14] George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), 303.
[15] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 302–3.

Iraqi army had been mobilizing troops, increasing its presence on the border to nearly 100,000 soldiers by 31 July.[16]

The move into Kuwait was a capstone to Saddam's increasingly provocative behavior and policy toward the United States and his Arab neighbors. In an abrupt shift in early 1990, Saddam began to claim a conspiracy against him, led by the United States, Israel, and Britain. He sought popular Arab backing through increasingly harsh rhetoric against Israel, threatening to incinerate the country if it ever struck Iraq again, as it had in the 1981 air strike on an Iraqi nuclear facility. Saddam also appeared to be making progress in developing weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. successfully uncovered and stopped his attempt to illegally procure triggering devices for nuclear weapons in March 1990, and in July it intercepted specialized tungsten furnaces that could also be useful in Iraq's nuclear weapons program. Finally, Saddam criticized other Arab nations over falling oil prices. As a member of OPEC, Iraq was subject to the organization's production levels and prices, yet increased oil flowing in from sources outside OPEC was pressuring its members to overproduce in order to maintain national revenue streams. The overproduction in turn drove oil prices further downward, reducing Iraq's revenue potential.[17] While other OPEC members were in a better financial position to weather the downturn, Iraq was nearly $90 billion in debt on the heels of a costly eight-year war with Iran that ended in 1988.[18] Saddam voiced bitter complaints about OPEC's policies and directed most of his anger toward Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.[19]

The morning after the invasion, President Bush signed an Executive Order to freeze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets in the U.S.[20] He also called King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to discuss the issue. The King explained how he had previously tried to resolve the situation with Saddam, then said, "He is following Hitler in creating world problems—with a difference: one was conceited and one is both conceited and crazy. I believe nothing will work with Saddam but the use of force."[21] Later that day in Moscow, Secretary of State James Baker issued a joint declaration with his Soviet counterpart

[16] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 313.
[17] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 307–8.
[18] Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 459.
[19] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 308.
[20] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 314.
[21] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 320.

condemning the Iraqi invasion. The statement against Saddam's actions was significant because it united the two superpowers on the same side of an international crisis for the first time since the beginning of the Cold War.[22] Within 24 hours of his invasion of Kuwait, Saddam was already becoming diplomatically isolated.

On 4 August, the National Security Council met at Camp David along with CENTCOM commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf, and CENTAF commander, Lieutenant General Chuck Horner, to discuss military options. Schwarzkopf emphasized the need for a minimum of 27 divisions to achieve a 3:1 attacker-to-defender ratio against the Iraqi army if the need to expel the invaders by force became apparent; Horner discussed how airpower would complement the ground effort by supporting the Army's scheme of maneuver. Airpower could also provide an option for punitive strikes against high-value targets in Iraq should Saddam decide to use Scud missiles with chemical warheads.[23]

The next day, the president answered a number of questions from the press corps. He discussed the diplomatic steps America was taking and explained that neither the U.S. nor its allies were willing to accept less than a total Iraqi withdrawal. The reporters questioned whether the U.S. would respond militarily, and what measures the nation would take to protect Americans in Kuwait. President Bush responded, "I am not going to discuss what we're doing in terms of moving forces, anything of that nature. But I view it very seriously, not just that but any threat to any other countries, as well as I view very seriously our determination to reverse this awful aggression. And please believe me, there are an awful lot of countries that are in total accord with what I've just said, and I salute them. They are staunch friends and allies, and we will be working with them all for collective action. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait."[24]

The same day, Schwarzkopf and Horner accompanied Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney to Saudi Arabia to discuss the issue of military assistance with King Fahd. Cheney's meeting with the King was productive, and resulted in the decision to invite U.S. forces into the country. Later that day, details regarding food, fuel, housing,

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[22] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 326.
[23] Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign 1989-1991* (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force, 2004), 27.
[24] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 332–33.

and basing were discussed.[25] The initial diplomatic groundwork was being laid that would enable the deployment of massive amounts of American ground forces and airpower. Most members of the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB had yet to expect any role in the developments in the Middle East.

The 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron Deploys

On 2 August 1990, the Rockets concluded an Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) with a final mission that consisted of a 24-aircraft strike package flying low-level on training route VR-1751 through the mountains of Virginia and West Virginia. Their targets were bridges in low-lying valleys, most of which were struck successfully with simulated ordnance. Remarkably, the wing intelligence team had come up with a notional scenario for the ORE three months prior that involved an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and a move to threaten Saudi Arabian oil fields. The squadron then learned that an actual invasion of the country had taken place during their pre-mission briefing for the final sortie of the exercise. At the end of the day, many of the discussions around the base revolved around whether they might find themselves involved in the developing crisis. Most were simply glad to be done with the ORE and looking forward to a long weekend that included a "Rocket Open" golf tournament with plenty of beer and friendly competition between the captains and colonels.[26] The squadron members kept an eye on the situation in Kuwait in the news, but before the weekend they had received no official information regarding the potential for their own involvement.[27]

The situation changed the following Tuesday, 7 August, when the Rockets received an alert notification for a deployment that had seemed improbable only a few days prior. Earlier that morning, squadron commander Lieutenant Colonel Russell Bolt, had told the squadron that if anyone were to be deployed, it would likely be the F-15Cs from Langley AFB.[28] As so often happens during the mobilization process, things changed. After finishing a morning flight, Captain Mark Waid said, "we went to the operations desk and that's when we got the word that we were on alert to deploy. They

[25] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 28–29.
[26] William L. Smallwood, *Strike Eagle: Flying the F-15E in the Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, Inc., 1994), 7.
[27] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle,* 3–7.
[28] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle,* 7.

said to go home and start packing."[29] The initial word was that they would go to Seeb, Oman. Not only did the Rockets go home to pack, many also raided sporting goods stores in Goldsboro, North Carolina to purchase personal 9mm automatic pistols. Once the prospect of combat in a hostile territory became real to them, many felt their issued .38-caliber revolvers that were a hassle to reload and carried only six rounds were insufficient. The squadron members also said unexpected goodbyes to their families, who were just as shocked as they were at the short-notice deployment. Lieutenant Colonel Steve "Steep" Turner, the wing weapons officer, spoke with his wife, Betty Jane. He recalled, "at the time she had no idea that I would have to go—and a few hours before that I had had no idea I would be going. We just didn't think it was going to happen to us."[30]

Wednesday morning, as the Rockets were scrambling around the base and city to pack and take care of last-minute necessities, President Bush spoke to the nation in a televised address at 9:00 am. By that time, the first elements of the 82d Airborne had already arrived in Saudi Arabia. The president was determined not to repeat the situation in the Rhineland in the 1930s, and made it clear he would not stand for appeasement.[31] He declared four political objectives in the address: "First, we seek the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace the puppet regime. And third, my administration, as has been the case with every President since Franklin Roosevelt, is committed to the security and stability of the Gulf. And fourth, I am determined to protect the lives of American citizens abroad."[32] To help accomplish these goals, the president looked to airpower to bolster the defenses of Saudi Arabia and the additional American forces that were soon to be deployed there.

On the morning of 9 August, only 48 hours after the initial alert, the Rockets departed Seymour Johnson AFB along with several augmenting crews of Chiefs from the 335th. The ceiling and visibility were below minimums for takeoff that morning, but the normal weather requirement was waived for the important mission. The F-15Es were

[29] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle,* 8.
[30] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle,* 9.
[31] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 340.
[32] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* 341.

loaded with three external fuel tanks, four AIM-9 heat-seeking air-to-air missiles, and two AIM-7 radar-guided air-to-air missiles. After making a brief and unplanned stop in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia after a 14-hour flight, the F-15Es were then immediately sent south to Oman. Due to the threat of Scud missile attacks, the commanders in theater did not want too many assets stationed at a single location, and moving the F-15Es down to Oman placed them well out of range of Iraqi ballistic missiles. Unsurprisingly, it also turned out that Oman did not want American fighters prominently displayed at its international airport in Seeb, so they were instead sent to the isolated bare base at Thumrait.[33] Other than a couple of aircraft that returned to Seymour Johnson AFB for maintenance issues and four jets with fuel leaks stuck at Dhahran, the majority of the squadron flew for almost sixteen hours that day to finally arrive in Oman. At the end of the day, the crews who made it all the way to Thumrait slept soundly on cots spread out in a storage hangar, halfway around the world from where they had awakened earlier that morning.[34]

General Chuck Horner, acting as CINCCENT while Schwarzkopf was in the U.S., worked in Riyadh to establish an initial employment plan for the air assets that were arriving. On 20 August, he was briefed by Colonel John Warden, from the Air Staff, about a strategic air campaign against Iraqi centers of gravity defined by Warden's Five Rings theory. Warden took a systems approach to targeting, and prioritized leadership and C2, essential industry, the transportation system, the population, and fielded military forces in that order of priority.[35] Warden appeared less concerned about the Iraqi armor in Kuwait than most of the officers in the theater. Horner's primary concern, for instance, was that the Iraqi Republican Guard divisions would begin to move south into Saudi Arabia before sufficient forces were deployed to stop them.[36] Although Warden's plan was met with initial approval by Schwarzkopf and General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Horner did not appreciate members of the Air Staff showing up in the theater to advise him on how he should run the air war. "You've got a different mindset in Washington, D.C. than you've got in theater when your ass is on the line," Horner

[33] "Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume II: Part I, Operations" (Washington, D.C., 1993), 18.
[34] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 18–20.
[35] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 39–40.
[36] Clancy, Tom and Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger* (New York: Berkley Books, 1999), 259–65.

said.[37] The concerns of each Airman were legitimate, yet they could not come to an agreement on employment priorities. Warden returned to the Pentagon, where he continued to assist with the planning effort, but he also left several Air Staff members in theater to augment CENTAF. Among those who remained was Lieutenant Colonel Dave Deptula, who created the Master Attack Plan (MAP) process that was to feed information into the Air Tasking Order (ATO).[38] Horner also called Brigadier General Buster Glosson to Riyadh to run planning for the offensive air campaign.[39]

In Oman, the Rockets were not directly threatened by the Iraqi army, but they rapidly began to prepare for defensive operations should they be called upon to defend Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, Thumrait had already been designated as a bomb dump for air operations in the region, so there were plenty of materials on site to immediately start producing munitions. Master Sergeant Danny Brown organized the munitions team the day after their arrival, and soon had a bomb assembly line churning out Mk-82s, Mk-84s, and Mk-20 Rockeyes (free-fall, unguided cluster munitions) at the rate of one weapon per minute.[40] Regarding their efforts, Steep Turner remarked, "we were amazed at what was going on…it was an incredible achievement…those guys saved our bacon."[41] As a result, the Rockets had twelve F-15Es on a fifteen-minute alert only two days after their arrival at Thumrait. In-theater communications were a challenge, and the squadron received frags (orders) over a commercial telephone line.[42]

Several aircrew members also began initial attack planning for how they would deliver those weapons. They planned 10, 20, and 30-degree diving deliveries, along with a variety of attack options at low and medium altitude. Lieutenant Colonel Slammer Decuir described what eventually became the most common attack as the "Kit and Kaboodle…we ingressed to the target at medium altitude, mapped our target with radar, rolled in with a diving delivery, and pickled [released bombs] above the range of the bad AAA and small shoulder-held SAMs. Generally, this meant that we pickled anywhere

[37] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 128.
[38] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 171.
[39] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 113.
[40] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 23–24.
[41] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 24.
[42] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 2, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

between 18,000 and 15,000 feet and tried to stay above 10,000 on the pullout."[43] No matter what tactics they would employ or targets they would be required to kill, the Rockets would be ready.

From Politics to Strategy to Tactics: Countering the Scud Missile Threat

As President Bush worked to gather further international support for collective action against Saddam Hussein, keeping Arab partner nations united in the coalition was a key concern. Saddam was determined to undermine the solidarity of the coalition against him with a variety of ploys intended to pull individual Arab states away and stir up popular sentiments against the West and, more importantly, against Israel. He first attempted to win the support of the less wealthy Arab states with large doses of "have-versus-have-not" propaganda that was critical of the materialism of the West.[44] Saddam's primary political strategy, which carried over into the conflict as well, was an attempt to link his struggle with the West to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian tensions, thereby deflecting Arab criticism away from the central issue of Iraq's unlawful occupation of Kuwait. In doing so, he tried to cast himself as the Arab leader against Israel to increase popular pressure on the Arab governments within the coalition to withdraw their support.[45] Essentially, Saddam intended to embarrass the coalition's Arab partners for supporting the cause of Israel over that of a fellow Arab nation and ostensibly, the Palestinians.

Saddam expressed his political strategy of 'linkage' between his own occupation of Kuwait and the Arab-Israeli conflict in a speech on 12 August: "I propose that all issues of occupation in the region, and that which had been misrepresented as occupation, be solved in accordance with the same standard, principles, and premises laid down by the UN Security Council…First, to make ready withdrawal arrangements according to the same principles for the immediate unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, and for the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, and for the withdrawal of troops on the Iraq-Iran front, and to make

[43] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 25–26.
[44] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 346.
[45] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 346.

arrangements for the status of Kuwait."[46] For some segments of the Arab population in the Middle East, including many Palestinians, the proposal was appealing. Several popular demonstrations were also organized in different Arab capitals to show support for Saddam, but the wider Arab reaction was more ambivalent.[47]

George Bush and other western leaders rejected Saddam's linkage strategy, yet he knew that he must keep Israel placed outside the coalition to maintain Arab support. Simultaneously, the president needed to reassure and protect Israel as a staunch ally of the U.S.[48] The Iraqi leader had threatened to attack Israel, should the coalition employ military force. The means to do so was Iraq's arsenal of Scud missiles. The Scud was a Russian ballistic missile and a direct technological descendant of the V-2, which the Soviet Union acquired from Germany following the Second World War. Iraq purchased Scuds from the Soviets during the 1980s, and had used them against Iranian cities to obtain political concessions during the Iran-Iraq War. In February 1988, Iraq began using the modified Scud-B, called Al-Husayn, with a range of 370 miles and the ability to reach Tehran.[49] By April 1988, the end of the second so-called "War of the Cities," Saddam had fired 200 Al-Husayns and inflicted approximately 2,000 civilian casualties, causing the Iranians to cease missile attacks on Baghdad.[50] He therefore had reason to believe he could achieve significant political effects against the coalition.

By threatening Israel, the Scuds would become the primary means of Saddam's political offensive against coalition unity during the war.[51] If he could provoke Israel to respond militarily to the Scud attacks, Saddam could chip away at the political will of Arab coalition members by creating public opposition to their participation in fighting alongside Israel. The ballistic missile threat also held many targets in Saudi Arabia at risk, which was the main reason why the Rockets had had to leave so quickly for Thumrait after first landing at Dhahran during their deployment. Before the fighting ever

[46] Kilic B. Kanat, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Authoritarian States: The Use of Multiple Diversionary Strategies by Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War," *Journal of Strategic Security* 7, no. 1 (2013): 16–32.
[47] Kanat, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Authoritarian States," 16-32.
[48] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 347.
[49] "Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume IV: Weapons, Tactics, and Training and Space Operations" (Washington, D.C., 1993), 30.
[50] "GWAPS Vol IV," 30.
[51] Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 281.

began, therefore, it was apparent the coalition would need to devote significant effort to countering the Scud missile threat.

In mid-August, Captain Mark Alred travelled with Steep Turner to Riyadh to discuss initial offensive planning for the F-15Es with General Buster Glosson. Regarding the initial plan, Alred said,

> It called for the 15Es to go after the Iraqi Scuds. We didn't care for that; it didn't seem to us like it was the most productive way to use our airplanes, and we told Glosson that when he asked our opinion. We knew it would be worse than looking for a needle in a haystack—trying to find mobile Scud launchers…[Glosson] listened patiently while we presented our point of view. Then he launched into a thirty-minute discussion on the predicament that we would be in if the Scuds were not neutralized. It was mainly a political discussion and he made us realize what a problem we would have if Israel got involved because of the Scuds. He took the time with us and was patient. I appreciated that. He also agreed with us. He said, 'I know good and well we can use your airplane better doing other things, but I can tell you right now, we're going to use a lot of your sorties chasing Scuds.'[52]

One of the squadron's primary missions, therefore, would be to directly counter Saddam's political and resulting military strategy. The F-15E was one of the few coalition assets at the time that was capable of searching for Scuds at night using an infrared sensor, the LANTIRN targeting pod. In addition to hunting for mobile Scuds, Alred and Turner were more satisfied to learn that the F-15E's mission on the first night of the war would be to strike fixed Scud sites deep in western Iraq. These were locations the Iraqis would likely use to launch missiles into Israel, and the large strike package planned was precisely the type of mission for which the squadron had trained.[53]

Tragedy During Training, and a New Commander

After the initial week of establishing alert operations and settling into life at Thumrait, the Rockets began training to prepare for a variety of missions in which they could be tasked for combat operations. With the addition of a terrain following radar and FLIR system that displayed terrain features at night through the head-up-display (HUD) in the cockpit, the F-15E was designed to fly at low altitude in the day or at night. The squadron trained to fly low altitude missions to avoid detection by early warning radar

[52] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 47.
[53] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 47.

systems, make it more difficult for enemy aircraft flying at medium altitude to detect and target their aircraft, and to avoid tracking by enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites. There was wide discussion among the aircrew, however, about how low was low enough. Although the minimum altitude for training was set at 300 feet, some squadron members felt training at 100-200 feet was more realistic for the combat conditions they would encounter in Iraq.[54] The dangers of low altitude flying were about to become more real to the squadron on a personal level.

On 30 September 1990, Major Pete Hook, and Captain Jim Poulet took off with their wingman, Captains Rick Henson and Steve Sanders. The mission was a two-ship formation of air-to-air intercept training with several British Jaguars that were also stationed at Thumrait. During the first intercept of the day, Hook and Poulet planned to stay level at low altitude to execute a stern conversion intercept on the Jaguars, who were performing a simulated attack on the base. The basic plan was to roll in on the attacking formation's six o'clock position to visually identify the target prior to weapons employment. It is unclear whether they realized it at the time, but the lead started to intercept a different formation of aircraft than the ones with which they had briefed the plan originally. Their wingman also experienced a radar malfunction during the intercept, so Hook sent them back to the original holding point to wait for the next setup opportunity.[55]

The crew proceeded to intercept a two-ship of Jaguars that were also flying at low altitude. They were unaware, however, that the Brits had a third aircraft in trail of the formation, waiting to take advantage of an unsuspecting attacker. As that aircraft rolled in to attack Hook and Poulet, Hook attempted a descending reversal maneuver to counter the attack. Already at low altitude, Hook's split-second defensive reaction sent them hurling rapidly toward the sand below. Henson and Sanders, who were miles away at the time, became concerned when they could not reach their flight lead on the radio after multiple transmissions. Henson said, "without knowing anything is wrong, I have a bad feeling—like when the hair on the back of your neck stands up and you know something is wrong. I didn't know what it was. I tried to call Pete a couple of times and can't get

[54] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 33.
[55] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 35–36.

an answer. I then hear over Guard [emergency communications channel], 'Knock it off; knock it off; we have a downed aircraft.'"[56]

With no time to recover from the maneuver or eject, Hook and Poulet had stayed with the aircraft all the way in. The safety board concluded the pilot had misjudged the aircraft's altitude, which is not hard to imagine in an environment of bright, blowing sand and shifting dunes that could easily play tricks on one's depth perception. The squadron was distraught over the loss. They honored their fallen brothers with a memorial service that packed a large hangar. Lieutenant Colonel Dick Hoey delivered a fitting eulogy for his friend and roommate, Pete Hook, while Captain John Pavlock spoke of brighter days and fond memories with his fellow bachelor pal, Jim Poulet. Hook's loss was also mourned by his wife and three children in North Carolina.[57] The spirit of these fine Americans lives on to this day in the Rockets' squadron bar at Seymour Johnson AFB, which is proudly known as the Hook Poulet Pub.

In mid-October, the squadron commander learned that he had been selected for promotion to colonel. Rumors spread that the Rockets might be getting a new commander, and frankly, many were excited at the prospect. The reality of the situation at the time was that the current commander had not earned the respect and trust of a majority of the squadron members. The commander of the 4th Fighter Wing, Colonel Hal Hornburg, had arrived in Thumrait by that time and announced that Lieutenant Colonel Steve Turner would be taking command on 31 October. The difference in the squadron after Turner took command was like "night and day."[58] After the war, Turner said, "when I took over the squadron, I wasn't happy with where we were going. I was happy with my people. It would have been a dream squadron for any new squadron commander because all those guys…had probably had two years or so in the F-4 before converting to the [F-15E]…so they had lots of flying time. They were probably the most experienced group you could get in this aircraft; but, there had been some problems due to previous management that had slowed things down. I did just the ropes on them and let them go and do their thing. It was just amazing. Leadership just came right up to the

[56] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 35–36.
[57] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 37–38.
[58] According to author William Smallwood, who interviewed more than fifty of the Rockets deployed in Thumrait at the time. Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 42.

top. All of a sudden thing we were having a hard time getting done, such as planning missions, this, that and the other…all that stuff went away."[59] Turner was already a respected leader and aviator in the community, and his tough and honest leadership style was exactly what the Rockets needed as they continued to prepare for war.[60]

War Momentum Builds

On 30 October, President Bush met with the NSC to make a fundamental decision that would affect the plan for buildup of U.S. forces. Should the coalition remain in a defensive posture in Saudi Arabia, or should it increase forces to prepare for offensive air and ground operations to push Saddam out of Kuwait? Colin Powell briefed the president on defensive military options first. He then described the option of an offensive air campaign that would precede a sweeping left hook of ground forces against the westward flank of the Iraqi army, which was designed to cut off the enemy troops from the rear.[61] Brent Scowcroft asked, "What size force are we talking about…how much more?"[62] "Nearly double," replied Powell.[63] The offensive option would increase the size of American forces in Saudi Arabia from the 250,000 needed for an adequate defense to over 450,000 troops. Much deliberation followed Powell's presentation until Bush decisively declared, "Okay, do it."[64] On 8 November, just after midterm elections, the president announced the deployment of another 200,000 troops to the Gulf "to ensure that the coalition has an adequate offensive military option."[65]

The president's decision had a direct impact on the Rockets. Two days later General Horner sent his head of logistics down to Thumrait to advise Colonel Hornburg that the F-15Es would be moving up to Saudi Arabia. Their new base would be in Al Kharj (affectionately known by most squadron members as 'Al's garage'), essentially a 10,000-foot runway and large ramp with nothing else but miles of desert all around. Simultaneously, the Chiefs of the 335th Tactical Fighter Squadron were informed that they too would deploy to Saudi Arabia shortly after Christmas. Just as the president's

[59] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 4, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[60] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 31–42.
[61] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 488.
[62] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 488.
[63] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 488.
[64] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 489.
[65] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 489.

decision doubled the number of troops deployed to Saudi Arabia, it also doubled the number of Strike Eagles to a total of 48 aircraft. The Chiefs were a welcome addition to the team in Saudi Arabia; a fellow Eagle Squadron, the unit had operated side by side with the 336th from the very beginning. Colonel Ray Davies, the tireless Deputy Commander of Maintenance, worked to prepare the base at Al Kharj for the arrival of the aircraft on 17 December. Regarding conditions at the new base, Turner recalled, "we had a long way to go. I sent an [advance] team out and when they were picked I told the guys it wasn't because of their tactical expertise…but who my best builders were. Five or six guys in the squadron were outstanding builders. Four or five others were good at scrounging. This team went to Al Kharj with my Operations Officer, Bob Gruver."[66] Meanwhile in North Carolina, the Chiefs began an intense training phase of simulated combat missions. They loaded external fuel tanks and bombs, practiced air refueling, and flew missions at night in large packages to prepare for their combat role.[67]

With so many additional forces on their way to the Gulf, there was also a noticeable shift in the squadron's previously defensive mindset. The more friendly forces that arrived, the less chance that Saddam would attempt a push into Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the Strike Eagle's role would logically shift toward the positive aim of kicking the Iraqis out of Kuwait. Squadron morale was growing and continued to improve with successful and realistic training missions under the leadership of Turner.

Letters, cookies, and memorabilia from friends and family back home also went a long way to lift the spirits of the deployed Rockets. Turner's wife, Betty Jane, gathered all the squadron spouses together to make decorative stockings and special gifts to send.[68] The torrent of letters and gifts that began pouring in for all of the deployed forces presented the U.S. Air Force with a significant challenge. At one point in December 1990, the flood of gifts and letters sent to the troops was filling four C-5 Galaxies per day.[69] According to Colin Powell, "American civilians were rallying around the troops as though they wanted to make up for the neglect during the Vietnam years. The

[66] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 5, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[67] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 52–59.
[68] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 49–60.
[69] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 495.

explosion of yellow ribbons on trees, homes, jackets, and blouses recalled a national unity not felt since World War II."[70]

Political Resolve and Reassuring Allies

The coalition received further political backing under United Nations Security Council Resolution 678, approved on 29 November. In a 12-2 vote (Cuba and Yemen voted against), the mandate authorized "all member states cooperating with the government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before January 15 1991 fully implements [the resolutions], to use all necessary means to uphold and implement [all those resolutions] and restore international peace and security to the area."[71] In the political language of the UN mandate, "all necessary means" implied an authorization for military action if necessary. The deadline was chosen to allow Saddam an opportunity to withdraw, and the coalition adequate time to build up the firepower to force him out should he refuse.

The UN resolution eased many of the president's concerns about maintaining a united coalition, but managing potential Israeli responses to Scud attacks still required his attention. George Bush met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for two hours on 11 December. Israel had already been keeping a low profile despite Saddam's increasing threats, but the president asked for more. He said, "if he attacks you, or if an attack becomes apparent, we have the capacity to obliterate his military structure…a preemptive strike by Israel would be very bad. I know your position about responding to an attack and I respect it. But if we could consult first, our preference would be for Israel not to respond until you have seen our reply. We have common objectives and I would like to fulfill them."[72] Shamir understood the coalition's difficulties, but also pointed out the dilemma his nation would face in the event of extensive civilian casualties. "I am encouraged by your words," Shamir replied, "but we will be obliged to defend ourselves and prevent continuation of such attacks. You say you will obliterate their capability, but you may miss some."[73]

The Scuds were a primary concern of Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, who communicated often with Israeli officials. Still, many officials and military officers did

[70] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 495.
[71] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 414.
[72] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 424–25.
[73] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 425.

not appreciate the potential collapse of the coalition if the Israelis joined the conflict. After the war, Horner explained, "It would not have bothered the Arab allies. Al-Buhairi [chief of the Royal Saudi Air Force] and I talked about that frequently. He said it was no problem."[74] Despite additional assurances from King Fahd about Saudi resolve in the event of Israeli participation,[75] the element of chance in war could bring swift changes in public opinion, meaning the issue was far from resolved across the entire coalition. A final issue related to the potential use of chemical or biological weapons in conjunction with Scud attacks. The disastrous potential of using those types of weapons warranted a specific deterrent threat from President Bush to the Iraqi foreign minister, stating that if Iraq were to employ [chemical or biological weapons], "the American people would demand the strongest possible response."[76] The coalition's mandate did not include regime change, but the possibility was implied, should the Iraqi leader resort to weapons of that sort.

President Bush cleared a final domestic political hurdle on 12 January, when the U.S. Congress voted to give the president authority to wage war against Iraq in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 678. The measure passed in the House 250 to 183; the Senate passed the joint resolution 52 to 47. In National Security Directive 54, issued on 15 January, the president repeated the four political objectives he had communicated to the nation in August 1990:

1. To effect the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait
2. To restore Kuwait's legitimate government
3. To protect the lives of American citizens abroad
4. To promote the security and the stability of the Persian Gulf[77]

Upon accomplishing those goals, military action would be terminated. Due to the limited objectives of military action, the president highlighted two additional constraints:

[74] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 269.
[75] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 269.
[76] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 270.
[77] "Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia," 8 Aug 1990, in "Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume II: Part II, Effects and Effectiveness" (Washington, D.C., 1993), 74.

1. Minimize U.S. and Coalition casualties and reduce collateral damage incident to military attacks, taking special precaution to minimize civilian casualties
2. The United States will discourage the government of Israel from participating in any military action[78]

It is important to note that, while targeting Iraqi leadership was a U.S. military objective, the removal of Saddam Hussein was not a political objective of the U.S. or the Coalition. A change in leadership was desired, but there was no consensus or UN mandate to go beyond expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Aerial bombing alone could not assure success, and the military occupation of Baghdad was politically untenable.[79]

The Storm Begins

General Buster Glosson arrived at Al Kharj on 13 January to brief two squadrons of anxious but ready F-15E pilots and WSOs. The crews listened intently as Glosson described the phases of the air campaign and their approximate duration:

Phase I: Strategic Air Campaign – six days
Phase II: Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO) Air Supremacy – one day
Phase IIIA: Battlefield Preparation-Republican Guard – five days
Phase IIIB: Battlefield Preparation-Kuwait – six days
Phase IV: Ground Attack – eighteen days[80]

The array of strike forces available for the air campaign by 15 January totaled 1,316 aircraft. Secretary Cheney had instructed the air planners to "hit the Scuds first," and that is precisely what the Rockets were tasked to do.[81] H-hour for Operation DESERT STORM was 0000 Zulu on 17 January 1991, 0300 Local in Baghdad, and 1900 Local in Washington D.C. on the evening of 16 January. The Rockets would hit Scud missile targets in western Iraq in the early morning darkness while their families and the rest of America watched the strikes and accompanying anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) snaking up from the city on CNN.

Captain Mark Alred led the mission briefing for the opening strike of the war. The mission was planned as a 'gorilla package' of twenty-two Strike Eagles along with

[78] From National Security Directive 54, 15 Jan 1991, in: "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 75.
[79] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 76–77.
[80] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 305.
[81] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 306.

three EF-111 Weasels to provide electronic jamming. The package, which included four crews from the Chiefs, was to fly out to the west, join up with seven KC-135 tankers for refueling, and then proceed at low altitude to strike five different fixed Scud launching sites in the vicinity of the H-2 airfield in western Iraq. Most of the F-15Es were loaded with two external fuel tanks, two AIM-9 missiles, and twelve 500-lb Mk-20 Rockeye cluster bombs.[82] The jets lacked LANTIRN targeting pods, which were still undergoing testing in the U.S., but they were not required for the planned attacks that night.[83] Regarding the mission brief, Alred said, "I just hit the highlights of the plan—everybody knew it by heart…it was a serious atmosphere; there was none of the levity that usually crops up from somewhere during peacetime briefs."[84]

At the conclusion of the briefing, Steep Turner stood to address the flyers. Lieutenant Brad Freels recalled, "I will never forget Colonel Turner standing up there saying, 'I don't question anybody's abilities in this room. I know all you guys will go out there and do what you are supposed to do tonight and do it well. But I'm going to tell you right now, my job is to make sure that I take every one of you home with me when this thing is over.'"[85] Turner's message echoed a similar sentiment from higher leadership. Just before the war, Horner and Glosson had also emphasized, "No mission was worth getting killed for. You could always come back another night."[86] These messages are not only an example of military commanders caring for the well-being of their personnel, they also reflect, in a sense, the limited nature of America's political aims in the war.[87]

One role of military commanders is to appreciate both the political aims of the war as well as the risks involved in achieving them. America's limited aims, combined with its apparent military advantages, meant that a single target did not merit undue risk; the attitudes of the commanders reflected that logic. The squadron's mindset during WWII offers a notable contrast, however, due to the unlimited political aims of that war.

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[82] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 65–68.
[83] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 340.
[84] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 66.
[85] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 66.
[86] Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 222.
[87] "If war is part of policy, policy will determine its character. As policy becomes more ambitious and vigorous, so will war." Clausewitz, *On War*, 606.

Blakeslee never argued that 'no mission was worth getting killed for,' because it would have been inconsistent with the nation's more ambitious aims and the immense efforts that were required to achieve them; the notion would have been misplaced—men were killed often, and were duly honored for their sacrifice. The paradox of a limited war mindset such as that in Desert Storm, however, is revealed at the tactical level in the minds of individual combatants. Certainly, *some* combatants must take risks to achieve the objectives sought, however limited, otherwise the nation's forces should not be there fighting in the first place. During execution, the risks that are accepted by choosing to fight must become a judgment call, first by senior leaders, then by squadron commanders, mission commanders, flight leads, and individual crews during combat. At the tactical level, during the actual fighting, the apparent tension between accepting risks and killing targets in pursuit of limited objectives illustrates the challenge commanders have in communicating acceptable risk to their personnel. The commanders wanted to ensure no single individual or crew felt that it was entirely up to them to win the war.

Twenty-two F-15Es, loaded to a maximum gross weight of 81,000 pounds, took off from Al Kharj that night and proceeded northwest for an hour to reach their refueling tracks in western Saudi Arabia. Tanker planning and tanker execution are two different matters, illustrated almost humorously when comparing the different perceptions of air refueling operations that night. The CENTAF Director of Operations, Major General John Corder remarked, "The first two-day plan was a thing of exquisite beauty, in terms of integration and coordination, especially with the tankers, because we wanted to get every possible bomb up there we could, at the right time and right coordinates."[88] It may have been beautiful in theory, but most of the Rockets that night felt the refueling was almost as dangerous as the mission itself. Captain Nick Sandwick said, "it was a real goat rope—we were radio silent [no transmissions] from the time we left and we get up to the tankers and all their lights are off…it was totally idiotic."[89] The dark night with challenging weather and so many aircraft in the sky in need of fuel was an aviator's nightmare. It was difficult enough to simply find the correct tanker, let alone dodge the other aircraft that were flowing in and out of the tanker tracks. Adding to those

[88] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 313–14.
[89] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 68–69.

challenges were the anxious thoughts of the Airmen, almost all of whom were on their first combat mission ever, as well as the pressure to make their planned time over target (TOT). To the planners' credit, however, all the F-15Es obtained their planned fuel offloads without significant delays, which was perhaps a 'thing of beauty' after all. Nineteen Strike Eagles pressed on after three jets turned back due to malfunctions.[90]

The strike train descended to low altitude and flew into Iraq through a gap in the early warning radar coverage created when U.S. Army Apache gunships took out the radar sites with Hellfire missiles only minutes earlier. Through the gap also poured F-15Cs to provide air-to-air top cover for the strike package; these aircraft could fire freely at any adversaries lifting off Iraqi airfields.[91] The TOT for the Strike Eagles was 0005 Zulu, the same time that the second wave of F-117s was to hit several targets in Baghdad.[92] The assigned TOT marked the only significant change from the original plan. The Strike Eagles were first scheduled to strike 30 minutes after the F-117s, but were then moved to simultaneous attacks. According to Turner, "the thinking was that when we started hitting Baghdad, the Iraqis would just push a button and then all the Scuds would just be taking off towards Israel. Taking that into account, that meant that we were going to go in at the same time…simultaneous strikes with the F-117s."[93]

Bill Polowitzer was flying with Mark Alred in the lead aircraft of the train; he was to set the timing for the entire package. As they continued into Iraq, exactly on time, other aircraft began splitting off from the train into smaller flights to proceed to their assigned target areas. Polowitzer and Alred's target was a fixed Scud site near the town of Al Qaim, where the Euphrates River crosses from Syria into Iraq. Polowitzer used the air-to-ground radar to make a map of the target, which he easily identified because it had a metal fence around it that displayed clearly on the radar map. Using the aircraft's radar map display, he designated the exact point where the weapons would impact while Alred turned toward the target, descended to 300 feet, and accelerated to over 500 knots for the

[90] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 69.
[91] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 340.
[92] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 340.
[93] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 8, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

target run. The crew had two more aircraft behind them preparing to strike Scud sites at the same complex; each jet flew six miles in trail of the preceding formation member.

Polowitzer described the attack as they entered the target area, "the bombs come off; you can feel the canisters release…our Rockeye [Mk-20] starts going off. It looks like huge sparklers—showers of sparkles," then "it's [AAA], and it's unbelievable! It looks like a waterfall, or like a wave or surf over us."[94] The twelve Mk-20 clamshell dispensers opened up on a time-delayed fuze and each one released 247 shaped-charge bomblets that could penetrate over 7 inches of armor.[95] The bomblets sliced through the Scud launch equipment in a wide area pattern. Predictably, anti-aircraft guns in the target area started firing within seconds after the first weapons impacted. Bill Mullins and Rich Horan were in the third aircraft in the train. After the first impacts, Horan said, "suddenly it's the most impressive fireworks display I've seen in my whole life."[96] Mullins remembered, "to this day I do not know how we got through the [AAA]. However, when we dropped down to 300, we were flying under a lot of it—I don't know if they couldn't depress their guns lower, or if we just lucked out. I made a couple of jinks [sharp turns], first left, then right, then lined up with three miles and twenty seconds to fly straight and level to the target."[97] Using the infrared display, Mullins and Horan saw a missile in the firing position and observed a large secondary explosion after their weapons impacted, presumably from the fully fueled Scud.[98]

The three Strike Eagles hit their targets and made it through intact, while similar attacks were underway in the other target areas. Turner led six aircraft to H-2 airfield, which was defended by 150 AAA batteries and ten SAM sites. "They never knew we were coming," he said, "we came though, it was like flying over North Carolina…lights were on, people were driving in their cars, and when I climbed up to roll in on H-2 airfield, it looked like RDU (Raleigh-Durham Airport). The lights were on, the strobe lights were on to light the way of the runways, and I actually didn't need to use my FLIR.

[94] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 73.
[95] "GWAPS Vol IV," 74.
[96] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 75.
[97] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 75.
[98] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 75–76.

But…as soon as the bombs hit, it was like they turned a switch. AAA was coming from everywhere…it was barrage fire."[99]

On the way out of Iraq, Captains Mark Stevens and Kevin Thompson were the first to encounter an Iraqi MiG-29 Fulcrum. As the aircraft approached at 4,500 feet on a reciprocal heading, Stevens locked the target on the radar, waited for a good tone from his AIM-9, and fired the heat-seeking missile at the MiG. The missile failed to track the target, however, and the Fulcrum flew by on their right side. The MiG continued in the opposite direction of the egressing strike train, fired a missile at Captain Jeff Latas and Lieutenant Russ Mack, but then impacted the ground while trying to maneuver into a firing position on another aircraft. Latas maneuvered aggressively to avoid the missile, exceeding the G-limits of the aircraft and simultaneously defeating the shot. The F-15Cs also aided the Strike Eagles during their egress, shooting down an Iraqi Mirage F-1 and likely causing the crash of a second.[100] The Iraqi pilots were not experienced with flying at night, and with no infrared or night vision systems, it was both easy and deadly to become disoriented at low altitude.

All twenty-two F-15Es that got airborne on the first night returned safely to Al Kharj. The return to base in the morning was a unique experience. The aircraft were met on the ramp by a cheering crowd of maintainers and other personnel from across the base. In a scene reminiscent of the media frenzy at Debden in years past, news photographers were also out on the ramp with their cameras to capture photos and video for the evening news in the U.S.[101] Captains Jim Henry and Randy Roberts were there as well, having spent the entire night waiting on alert for Scud launches. They had eight different locations for suspected launch zones programmed in their navigation system, but were never called upon to launch; nevertheless, they shared happily in the squadron's accomplishments. Henry said, "we saw those guys come in that morning and I don't know if I will ever have that surge of emotion again in my life. The way I felt when I

[99] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 9, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[100] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 79–85.
[101] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 10, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

saw those jets come back in the morning and all the troops on the line cheering and waving flags—it was one of the highlights of my life."[102]

After the adrenaline of the first mission began to wear off, most tried to get some rest, which proved difficult. As the squadron commander with numerous additional duties, Turner related his personal battle rhythm following the first mission: "It took ten hours from the time I landed, to work out [the various squadron issues] before going to bed. From that point on, it was like a treadmill and it was that way for 44 days. Mornings were normally good, with everyone back on base. You could go to your quarters, and might get a few hours sleep, but you wouldn't get much more than that because the sun came up…unless you took sleeping pills. And then when you woke up, you'd listen to BBC to see if the war was over yet and if we'd won. Then you'd start getting that bad feeling in your stomach, start knotting up, and you'd have to go to work again."[103] Unlike an operational readiness exercise, no one knew when the job would end.

Kill and Survive

Early in the second night of the war, a sixteen-ship package of Strike Eagles was launched; a four-ship of Rockets were to attack bridges north of Basrah while the remaining twelve aircraft in the Chiefs struck two electric power plants in the city itself. The weapon aimpoints on the power plants were constrained by political desires to limit permanent damage to Iraqi infrastructure, so the crews targeted fuel tanks rather than more vital components.[104] After in-flight refueling, the formation dropped to low altitude to ingress. Several factors complicated the attack on the refinery that night. A division of Republican Guard troops was located near their route of flight and the F-15Es began taking a high volume of aimed AAA approaching the target. Also, Navy aircraft had already struck the target when they arrived, so there were significant fires roaring at the refineries which created a bright glow that was amplified by the 4,000 foot overcast ceiling. Captains Mark Mouw and Tom O'Reilly, who were leading the mission, called

[102] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 85–86.
[103] Oral History Interview of Lt Col Steve Turner by Frederick Claypool, 19 July 1991, Typed Transcript, p. 10, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[104] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 293.

for a maximum loft delivery of the twelve Mk-82s from each aircraft in order to keep the formation as far away from the target area as possible during the attack.[105]

Captain Merrick Krause and Maj Joe Seidl, callsign T-bird Three, were in the formation of six that was hitting one of the power plants. Prior to the final run in, they had to react to aimed AAA and were forced to defensively maneuver away from the formation. After avoiding the threat, they jumped back into the train as the sixth and last aircraft to approach the oil refinery. Krause said, "when we got back in line I checked right to get Joe an angle for mapping and we were right in the thickest of the AAA. It was everything: small arms, a couple of [ZSU-23s]—lots of 37 and 57mm. Also, the heat of the fires at the refinery had my HUD almost completely washed out—I had trouble reading the symbology."[106] The crew now approached the target directly behind Majors Tom Koritz and Donnie Holland, who were T-bird Six. As had happened the night before, the AAA became more intense as each aircraft flowed through the target area in sequence. After releasing their weapons as the last in line, Merrick was pulling the aircraft left to descent and get away from the area when he looked down at the ground. "Oh, somebody missed," he remarked, as they flew over an area of flames and debris about four miles from the target.[107] Minutes later, Mouw did a radio check. All responded to the radio check in except Koritz and Holland, T-bird Six. Knowing they were the last formation member to egress out of the six, Krause and Seidl checked their air-to-air radar display to count the number of aircraft in front of them: only four.

Just as the realization began to set in that the flames they had overflown were not bombs that had missed at all, but actually the wreckage of T-bird Six, Seidl yelled, "Break left!"[108] Krause banked the F-15E and broke right by mistake, which was still better than no maneuver at all. Fortunately, he had already jettisoned the external fuel tanks, and the aircraft was much more maneuverable without the 6,000 pounds of ordnance they had just unleashed on the oil refinery. Krause made a hard turn left, then back to the right as they observed cockpit indications of a Roland [SAM] launch and saw

[105] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 89–92.
[106] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 96.
[107] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 97.
[108] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 98.

what looked "like a white candle with a rocket motor" zipping toward them.[109] As the aircraft over-G warning voice blared, a missile came in over the top right wing and exploded right in front of them. After the near miss, Krause pushed the nose over and quickly descended back to low altitude. The situation finally settled down and the formation settled in for the 400-mile trip south to Al Kharj, minus a wingman.

The loss of Tom Koritz and Donnie Holland was felt deeply by the Chiefs and Rockets alike. Captain Jack Ingari, the Chiefs' flight surgeon, was a close friend of Koritz, who had been a flight surgeon himself in addition to his USAF pilot qualification. Ingari said, "he was smart enough to be both a doctor and a fighter pilot—but he was born to fly—that is what he loved, and he waived his Geneva right to fly combat…so he died doing what he wanted to do."[110] Fellow Chief, Chris Hill, wrote the following about Donnie Holland: "[he] was like a father to me…He was a good friend and the kind of person I often looked to as a role model. Not just as an officer, but as a parent and a person."[111] Hill went on to write, "Losing a very dear friend has taken whatever romance there was out of the war. It is now a matter of killing and surviving."[112] Hill's observation could easily have been written by John Godfrey, Don Gentile, or any of the members of these squadrons who had learned to kill and survive in 1944.

A new tactical question was raised as a result of the dense threat environment the F-15Es were encountering at low altitude. During Desert Shield, Chuck Horner had determined there would be no low-level tactics or training unless the respective wing commanders could provide adequate justification for it. The only commanders that argued for low-altitude tactics were from the F-15E and F-111 communities, so Horner allowed these aircraft to fly low in combat at the outset of Desert Storm.[113] Considering the infrared displays and terrain-following systems in these platforms, as well as aircrew that were highly trained in low altitude operations, it made sense that these communities took the stance they did. Regrettably, T-bird Six became the first USAF aircraft that was

[109] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 98.
[110] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 100.
[111] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 102.
[112] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 102.
[113] Clancy, Tom and Horner, Chuck, *Every Man a Tiger*, 352.

lost in the Gulf War.[114] Yet, the loss of an aircraft does not necessarily invalidate a tactic. In the wake of the crash, however, and with the broad range of threats witnessed at low altitude, the Strike Eagles subsequently changed to medium altitude tactics. The decision also made sense considering the degraded state of the Iraqi air force after the first 48 hours, and the fact that the activity level of enemy SAM/AAA radars had already fallen by more than 90 percent.[115] The F-111s eventually followed suit.

When it Rains, it Storms

Exactly twenty-four hours after the first coalition air strikes, the Iraqis replied by launching a barrage of Scuds aimed at Israel. Beginning at 0259 in Baghdad and continuing for about 30 minutes on the morning of 18 January, five missiles landed in Tel Aviv and three in the northern coastal town of Haifa.[116] Although the Scuds were not armed with chemical or biological warheads and did not cause serious damage, their psychological impact was severe. President Bush began receiving conflicting information almost immediately. In a classic example of the fog of war, he was first told that there were five missiles, then seven, then that chemical weapons were used and that they had hit Lebanon. He finally received an accurate report that there were no chemical warheads and that all missiles had hit in Israel, but his primary consideration was how the Israelis might respond. Cheney reported that Israeli Defense Minister Arens had called him immediately after the attack to request Patriot missile batteries along with American forces to crew them as soon as possible; the Patriots had been offered beforehand but were refused. [117] The Israeli Cabinet had compromised a sacred principle to invite foreign defense assistance into the country.[118] Scowcroft thought it would be nearly impossible to keep them from retaliating. He made the argument that, from a military perspective, deconfliction of strike assets would be extremely difficult, especially because the Israeli air force did not possess the aircraft identification codes used by the coalition to comply with rules of engagement. After three hours, Secretary Baker was

[114] "Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume V: Part I, A Statistical Compendium" (Washington, D.C., 1993), 642.
[115] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 156.
[116] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 332.
[117] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 452.
[118] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 336.

finally able to get through to Shamir, who confirmed that there were no casualties and agreed that Israel would restrain itself for the moment.[119]

Within six hours of the first strikes, Schwarzkopf had already received numerous calls from Washington about the attacks. Horner and Glosson immediately pivoted their attention toward finding and killing the mobile launchers as a priority in planning and execution.[120] They diverted three AC-130H gunships to begin the search as an initial measure, but the effort with the AC-130s only lasted four nights, and was ceased after the less-maneuverable aircraft began taking increased fire from SA-7s, SA-8s [SAMs] and 23-mm and 37-mm AAA.[121] Schwarzkopf and Horner had minimized the military value of the Scuds. For example, the Al-Hussein version of the Scud had a circular error probable (CEP) of over 2,000 meters and a meager 180 kilograms of high explosives.[122] From a purely military perspective, their viewpoint was correct; yet, these military leaders mistakenly discounted the weapon's political value.

The next night, the president received another call from Scowcroft at 0130 in Washington. Israel had been struck again, and this time they wanted to send 100 aircraft across Saudi Arabia for a counterstrike. Israeli fighters were already airborne and orbiting. After Saudi Arabian officials vehemently rejected that option, the Israelis asked about overflight of Jordan instead. President Bush called Shamir at three in the morning, "I just want to make one last appeal, recognizing how hard for you it is to wait. We are hitting those same targets that you would be going after."[123] Shamir spoke forcefully, "we have been attacked and are not doing anything…our people don't understand. By our intimate relationship we have to find a way to participate in this war."[124] Next, the president even suggested Israel might respond in kind with its own ballistic missiles. After Israeli internal discussions and simultaneous coordination efforts on many levels, Shamir remarkably stood down from the retaliatory strike yet again.[125] Bush agreed to send two Patriot batteries with American crews to Israel. The president also dispatched

[119] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 453.
[120] Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 346.
[121] "GWAPS Vol IV," 275.
[122] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 318.
[123] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 455.
[124] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 455.
[125] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 455.

Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz to Israel to oversee the delivery of the Patriots and aid in personal diplomacy.[126] The telephone game would not likely continue to be sufficient.

Later that morning, Defense Secretary Cheney was distraught over a perceived lack of emphasis on additional Scud hunting sorties. "I want some coverage out there," he yelled, "If I have to talk to Schwarzkopf, I'll do it. As long as I am secretary of defense, the Defense Department will do as I tell them. The number one priority is to keep Israel out of the war."[127] Colin Powell worked to calm things down and then met individually with Cheney to continue the meeting. It was Powell's responsibility to ensure the military was responsive to the political leaders in Washington. Later that day, Rear Admiral Mike McConnell, the JCS chief intelligence official, called to alert his friend Buster Glosson at the Black Hole in Riyadh about the plans in Washington. McDonnell told him that Washington wanted to step up the counter-Scud efforts, and that even the presence of American aircraft airborne over western Iraq would be reassuring to the Israelis, who could see them on their radars. The official CENTCOM request was soon relayed to Chuck Horner as well.[128]

In the Black Hole planning group in Riyadh, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Deptula worked furiously to re-task air assets on the Master Attack Plan (MAP) to cover every Scud target available. The information in the MAP was then translated into the Air Tasking Order (ATO), which doled out targeting assignments and alert duties by aircraft platform. His suspicion that the coalition was already hitting virtually every possible target that Israel wanted to strike was confirmed weeks later when Major General Thomas Olsen, the CENTAF vice commander, returned from a military coordination trip with Israel's proposed target list. The coalition was going above and beyond the targeting requests of the Israeli Defense Force, strengthening the argument for Israeli restraint.[129]

Captain Joel Strabala was the Strike Eagle liaison at the TACC, and had just finished his duties in the mission planning shop when Buster Glosson rushed up to him.

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[126] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 337.
[127] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 234.
[128] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 234–35.
[129] Lt Gen David Deptula, interview by the author, March 21, 2019.

Strabala said, "he came up and said to cancel twenty-four of the F-15E [sorties] for tonight—that we had to send a whole squadron back up to northwest Iraq to hit H-2 and the fixed Scud launching sites northwest of H-2, and that the first TOT up there would be 2300 hours."[130] Over the next six hours, the maintainers at Al Kharj scrambled to change weapons loadouts to Mk-84s, and a four-ship of Strike Eagles launched for a medium altitude attack on the Scud sites. The strikes were successful, although many of the locations had previously been targeted. The SAM threat in the area of the targets near Al Qaim, however, had been intense. The formation had pressed in to the target without electronic jamming support from EF-111 Weasels due to the last-minute changes.[131]

Search and Rescue?

The fourth night of the war for one formation of Chiefs was almost a repeat of the previous night. Glosson passed another last-minute change to send more Strike Eagles back to Scud targets near Al Qaim. The F-15E planners had a couple of hours to coordinate an ad hoc tanker schedule and Weasel support due to all of the SAMs the night before.[132] Lieutenant Colonel Robin Scott and Captain Larry Bowers led the formation to conduct medium altitude dumb bomb attacks. The weather was terrible for air refueling, the Weasels were late, the SAMs were intense, and the second F-15E of the war was shot down. After dropping their bombs, Scott and Bowers dodged two consecutive SA-2 missiles. Scott said, "we estimated that there were ten to fourteen SAMs launched against our package that night and all the guys were breaking for them. It was chaos and as we egressed we were waddling back up to altitude to get away from the [AAA] and my mouth is like cotton. Then, remembering the Basrah mission, I check my flight as soon as I could. Two checked in and Four checked in. But no Three. I called, 'Four, have you seen Three?' 'Negative,' was the reply. Three was Colonel Dave Eberly and Major Tom Griffith. Nobody saw them get hit. Nobody saw them go down. They were just not there anymore. Now, we are climbing out, trying to get on SAR [frequencies], reporting to AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System], and coming back out."[133]

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[130] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 105.
[131] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 106–10.
[132] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 111–13.
[133] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 114.

Griffith later reported that he and Eberly had seen two missiles guiding on their aircraft when they were about eight miles from the target. After maneuvering to avoid those shots, they lined up with the target when an explosion on the left side of the airplane shook them. Griffith said, "never been hit in an airplane before but it's pretty clear…when it happens. Not really quite sure how much damage there was to the airplane because almost immediately…[Eberly] pulled the ejection handle. Bail out at night. We were about 25,000 feet going about 500 miles an hour. Fortunately, the ejection seat worked really well."[134] He was able to link up with Eberly on ground by using his PRC-90 survival radio. Griffith had twisted his knee upon landing but was still mobile; he found that Eberly was bleeding from the neck, so he helped him bandage his wound. The two found an area of high ground with a place to hide that also afforded a view of the surrounding area; they would remain on the hill for the next two days.[135]

Back at Al Kharj, and knowing that two of their own could be somewhere out in the desert, emotions began to run high due to the perceived lack of urgency on the part of combat search and rescue (CSAR) coordinators. The wing commander, Colonel Hornburg, was on the phone constantly with the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC). Turner led an eight-ship formation of Rockets back to Al Qaim for more Scud targets the next night. After dropping their bombs, Captain John Croghan and Major Gary Cole heard a radio transmission from Griffith. Cole transmitted back to him, "Corvette Zero-Three, this is Chevy Zero-Six, we read you loud and clear…Zero-Three, this is us. Hang tight, we'll get somebody looking for you."[136] After the flight returned to base and Hornburg learned that the crew and been positively contacted, he became even more angry with the lack of initiative at the JRCC. Hornburg said, "it seemed to me that the forces running the [CSAR] wanted a perfect situation…those guys at JRCC would not take our word for it. So we fly the tape to Riyadh and they say, finally, 'Yep, now that we have heard the voice, we believe what you heard was in fact true.' I mean it was frustrating beyond belief."[137] Steep Turner said, "there were thirty-six hours after I

[134] Michael Ryan and Christopher Jefferson, *The Spirit of the Storm: A Collection of Interviews from the Gulf War Era,* ed. Lisa Beckenbaugh, Tenaya Humphrey, and Jared Donnelly (Montgomery, AL: Gathering of Eagles Foundation, 2017), 141.
[135] Ryan and Jefferson, *The Spirit of the Storm,* 141–42.
[136] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 122.
[137] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 123.

came back from that mission where we heard [Griffith] when I literally drove myself into the ground. I didn't sleep. Bob Gruver [Rockets operations officer] or I were on the phone constantly. I'm sure we were yelling and shouting and doing everything we could to get that [CSAR] going."[138]

By the end of the second night, the JRCC had received confirmation of presence, but no position fix. Unfortunately, the PRC-90 radio the crewmembers carried was limited to nonsecure channels and had no ability to transmit the crew's location on the ground. Furthermore, the Iraqis were monitoring those frequencies and were also searching on the ground with direction-finding equipment that could detect the transmissions. The JRCC formed a plan for Pave Low helicopters with HC-130 tankers to launch from Batman in Turkey, cross through Syria to pick up the airmen, and then egress out of Iraq to the west. That plan was foiled when Syria refused overflight clearances, so the JRCC elected not to launch that night either.[139]

During their third night on the ground and within a few miles of the Syrian border, Eberly and Griffith began walking northwest to try to make it out of Iraq. Griffith said, "we were tired and thirsty…we took a break and as we were sitting there we could see what looked like an abandoned building. We talked about it and, since we were getting desperate for water now, we start thinking that maybe somewhere close there would be a well where we could get some water. Unfortunately, it was not abandoned. It was a guard shack for the Iraqi side of the border. A couple of guys on the roof heard us as we started toward it. They started yelling and shooting off AK-47s, then other guys came running out of the building—about ten of them, all with automatic weapons…we had no chance at all against them."[140] Griffith went on to say, "our mind was obsessed with water. Thirst saps energy and the thought of water completely dominates your mind."[141] The lesson serves as an enduring caution for evaders. John Godfrey related similar thoughts when he was caught by the German farmer when drinking from a stream in 1944.

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[138] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 124.
[139] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 261.
[140] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 125.
[141] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 125.

The two captives did get water and some sleep that night before they were transported to Baghdad and thrown into solitary confinement for the remainder of the war. The squadrons back at Al Kharj harbored bitter feelings, not toward the combat rescue Airmen, but toward the slow-moving bureaucracy that wasted so much time and prevented their squadron mates from getting picked up. The JRCC personnel finally decided to launch on the following night without waiting for Syrian approval, which eventually came while they were in flight anyway. The Pave Lows landed near the Iraqi border and attempted to reach Corvette Zero-Three on the PRC-90 channels, but the two airmen had long since been captured.[142] Griffith recalled, "do I wish we had been rescued—yes, but I knew based on where we were shot down, based on the assets that could come and get us, it was going to be a long shot. We were so far into Iraq and we knew that before the war. It wasn't a big surprise to me."[143] Eberly's face soon appeared in a CNN broadcast from Baghdad, which did not improve morale in the Strike Eagle community, but at least that meant that he, and hopefully Griffith, were both still alive.[144] Perhaps their closest call came on 23 February when F-117s bombed the Baghdad headquarters of the Iraqi Intelligence Service, where the two were kept in brick prison cells. Miraculously, the 2,000-pound GBU-27s did not kill any of the coalition prisoners, who were later repatriated. No one at CENTCOM had any idea of the prisoners' whereabouts.[145]

The Continuing Scud Hunt

As Scuds continued to strike Israel during the first week of the war, Eagleburger and Wolfowitz worked directly with the Israeli leadership to coordinate American assistance. Eagleburger described his role, "Scuds keep landing and we have continuing conversations with the Prime Minister, with the Defense Minister and so forth, and each time there would be a Scud attack, there would be an Israeli reaction, we must do something."[146] The task of 'doing something' fell most heavily on CENTAF, then trickled down to large efforts by the F-15Es at night and A-10s by day. Other aircraft

[142] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 261.
[143] Ryan and Jefferson, *The Spirit of the Storm*, 145.
[144] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 126.
[145] Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 408–9.
[146] Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, 337.

also participated in the operation, including targeting pod-equipped F-16s, F-111Fs, F-117s, B-52s, Navy A-6Es and F/A-18s, and Royal Air Force GR-1 Tornados.[147]

At the beginning of the war, the total number of mobile launchers the Iraqis were estimated to possess ranged in the mid-thirties.[148] The objectives of the Scud hunt were to find, engage, and destroy the launchers. Historically, the hunt can be compared to Operation Crossbow, the Allied air effort against German V-1 and V-2 sites during the Second World War, but there was never an attempt to target mobile V-2 launchers. The efforts of the 336th during the Second World War mainly involved escorts for bombing missions that were to strike the launch sites, but now they would be searching out the mobile launchers themselves. The Scud hunt, then, was significant as the first air campaign against mobile ballistic missiles.[149]

The Chiefs were the first to receive LANTIRN targeting pods, which were taken directly from the 422d Test and Evaluation Squadron at Nellis AFB. Operational testing of the pods with GBU-12 laser-guided bombs (LGBs) was still underway, but the deployed operations became a priority, so testing and aircrew training were continued in the field at Al Kharj. LANTIRN pods were essential not only to provide laser guidance for the LGBs, but to aid in infrared searches for mobile Scud launchers at night. The LGBs were the first precision weapons carried by the Strike Eagle, and their benefits were immense. Once the deployed squadrons began to fly higher and drop dumb bombs from medium altitude, bombing accuracy naturally decreased because the aircraft were then further away from the target. LGBs, which had first been employed in Vietnam, solved the aiming problem with their ability to guide to a laser spot fired by the F-15E's LANTIRN pod, thus maintaining high accuracy even from medium altitude. Because the Chiefs were the first to receive the pods, they bore the brunt of the Scud hunt for the first week until more targeting pods arrived from the United States, although they were augmented by crews from the Rockets until that point.[150]

On a typical Scud patrol sortie, a two-ship flight, one aircraft with a targeting pod and LGBs, the other with twelve Mk-82s [500-pound dumb bombs], would launch before

[147] "GWAPS Vol IV," 275–76.
[148] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 320.
[149] "GWAPS Vol IV," 276.
[150] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 129–37.

sunset. They would fly out to the western Scud container between H-2 airfield and Al Qaim, where they would loiter in a racetrack pattern. The aircraft with dumb bombs would then proceed to drop a single weapon at varying intervals ranging from every five to twenty minutes, as specified in the ATO. In theory, the periodic explosions on the ground in areas known for Scud activity would deter the launching crews and force them to remain in hiding or under cover. Meanwhile, the WSO with the targeting pod would search along the roads for signs of enemy activity.

The main problem these crews faced was the inability to search wide areas. Radar maps and targeting pod searches for Scuds in the vast desert were almost pointless without coordinates for where to focus the search. Occasionally, the crews would work with an E-8 JSTARS, which had a wide-area surveillance radar, to attempt to find moving equipment on the ground. If a launcher were to be found, the aircraft with the pod would strike it with LGBs. Each two-ship could remain on station for about an hour before returning to the tanker, so typically four aircraft were airborne during a Scud hunt, two on patrol and two with the tanker. When these aircraft were replaced by another flight of four, eight aircraft in all were airborne simultaneously. In addition to these eight aircraft, eight more F-15Es were on Scud alert on the ground at Al Kharj in case the airborne aircraft were needed to strike any launchers.[151] The patrols, which lasted for about 14-hours each night, took the effort of an entire squadron, and quickly grew wearisome for the crews.[152]

Shoot and Scoot

The tactical purpose of the airborne Scud patrols was to provide the fighters with an opportunity to reach the firing location quickly enough to use on-board sensors to acquire and destroy the launchers before they could leave.[153] Usually, launches were first detected visually. Mark Stevens, an instructor pilot in the Rockets, compared the visual signature of a launch to that of an aircraft in full afterburner, much bigger than a SAM. Once the missile reached 20,000 feet with continued vertical acceleration, it was easily confirmed as a Scud.[154] On one Rockets Scud patrol, Captains Tom McIntyre and Bill

[151] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 188.
[152] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 132–33.
[153] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 334.
[154] Mark Stevens, F-15E pilot, to the author, e-mail, April 15, 2019.

Mullins were carrying LGBs and the targeting pod for the first time. McIntyre said "we get this call from AWACS. 'A Scud has been launched at coordinates such and such!' We've already seen it, of course. It's a huge flame and your first reaction is that it's a SAM and you want to make a defensive reaction. Then you see that it is going straight up…. It was about twenty-five miles away from us but when we got there, we went up and down the road and all I could find in the targeting pod was a hot spot on the ground. It was no longer than five minutes after the launch when we found the hot spot. Those guys were fast."[155]

Even when launches were spotted or search coordinates were provided, the Scuds were incredibly difficult to find. The Iraqis likely pre-calibrated their launchers and missiles so that all they needed to do was wheel the weapon to the proper launch area, hoist the missile, and shoot. Within minutes of firing, they were gone. The tactic became known as "shoot and scoot." They also undertook numerous tactical deception measures, which included decoys of various levels of fidelity, camouflaged netting, and hiding launchers under overpasses.[156]

Help on the Ground

Schwarzkopf permitted the insertion of British Special Air Service (SAS) forces into western Iraq in order to gain intelligence and harass the Iraqi army, but their efforts were quickly diverted to the Scud hunt mission as a primary task. British Lieutenant General Peter de la Billière worked closely with Chuck Horner to work out a plan of deconfliction between aircraft dropping bombs in the Scud areas and the SAS patrols, some of which had been inserted on foot. The SAS began surveillance of the Scuds, which mostly travelled along roads and main supply routes. They could either call in an air strike or attempt to destroy it themselves with anti-tank weapons.[157] After the initial success of the SAS, American special operations forces (SOF) also entered the area. They worked on the north side of the main highway that connected Baghdad and Amman, Jordan, known as "Scud Boulevard," while the SAS operated to the south in

[155] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 138.
[156] "GWAPS Vol IV," 274–95.
[157] Peter de la Billière, *Storm Command: A Personal Account of the Gulf War* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 226–27.

what become known as "Scud Alley."[158] The use of ground forces supported by airpower proved a much more effective combination in the Scud hunt. The British and American special operators eventually drove the Scuds to operate further east, until they were out of range of targets in Israel. These coalition forces in the western desert also drew significant Iraqi effort away from the main theater of operations.[159]

Due to the small number of forces inserted and their relative vulnerability against the larger Iraqi army, the special operators called in the Strike Eagles numerous times to aid in targeting the threatening ground forces. On one occasion, Tim Bennett and Dan Bakke, two aircrew members in the Chiefs, were called in to support American SOF members who were pinned down by three Iraqi Hind helicopters. They dropped a two thousand-pound GBU-10 that sliced through one of the helicopters that was hovering between 800-1,000 feet above the ground; the remaining helicopters scattered. Bennett and Bakke not only achieved the Strike Eagle's first air-to-air kill by using a bomb, but more importantly, they saved the lives of the American special operators.[160] Being able to help friendly forces on the ground provided many F-15E aircrew with their most rewarding experiences of the war.

Regardless of the actual destruction of Iraqi Scud launchers, the efforts of the squadron were having the desired effect, especially when combined with the use of ground forces. The effect was not only to limit Iraq's launches toward Israel, but more importantly, to keep Israel from responding militarily to the Scud attacks. Much like Eagle Squadron Number 133 helped build a political bridge across the Atlantic Ocean during World War II, the political effect of the squadron's employment in the Gulf War was one of its more significant contributions to the coalition effort.

Decapitation

In accordance with John Warden's Five Rings theory, leadership and command and control (C2) were at the center and therefore represented a most critical strategic target set. The F-15Es were tasked with three separate high-value targeting missions intended to strike Iraqi leadership. The U.S. military intended to target Saddam during

[158] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 143.
[159] de la Billière, *Storm Command: A Personal Account of the Gulf War*, 227.
[160] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 144–49.

the war, but the political environment at the time was more complex. UN Security Council Resolution 678 provided only a mandate to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restore the legitimate Kuwaiti government. U.S. political objectives went no further either. These thoughts were going through the president's mind at the end of January 1991, approximately two weeks into Desert Storm. President Bush did not want the nation to take on the responsibility that would come with a forced regime change, but he hoped the U.S. military could either take him out in an air strike or force a military coup. He wrote in his diary on 31 January: "I just keep thinking the Iraqi people ought to take care of [him] with the Iraqi military. Seeing their troops [and] equipment getting destroyed—they've got to do something about it. I wish like hell that we could…. This is a war and if he gets hit with a bomb in his headquarters, too bad. But it seems to me that the more suffering the people of Iraq go through, the more likely it is that somebody will stand up and do that which should have been done a long time ago—take the guy out of there—either kick him out of the country or do something where he is no longer running things."[161] Pushing ground forces in to occupy Iraq would have shattered the coalition and turned the Arab world against the U.S.[162] Airpower offered the only military possibility for getting Saddam.

When the F-15Es received calls for missions that might fulfill such wishes, they had utmost priority. Multiple times, aircrew that returned to Al Kharj exhausted after four or five hours of Scud patrol got the call and turned around to launch on a high-value political mission. On one such occasion, the commander said "I started talking to some of the crews as they came in; I wanted my most experienced guys, but I made it strictly voluntary. They all wanted to go but one pilot came up to me and questioned whether he was physically able to do it. I took one look at him and saw that he was out of it. That's when I decided that I should lead the flight."[163] These sorties aimed at leadership targets ranged from an attack on a bunker near heavily-defended Kuwait City to a strike on a mobile encampment near H-2 airfield.[164] While unsuccessful in the end, hopes of a

[161] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 464.
[162] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 464.
[163] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 153.
[164] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 152–59.

successful military decapitation strategy often rested on the flexibility and rapid responsiveness of the Strike Eagles.

The Commander in Chief Visits

As the squadrons continued Scud patrols and interdiction sorties in Iraq, the Commander in Chief visited the U.S. home of the Rockets and Chiefs on 1 February 1991. The president was aware of the deaths of Pete Hook, Jim Poulet, Tom Koritz, and Donnie Holland. He knew that Dave Eberly and Tom Griffith were being beaten in their prison cells in Baghdad. President Bush wanted to meet the families first-hand and see what the war was doing to those with loved ones who were deployed in the Gulf. After visiting the Marines at Cherry Point, he then flew to Goldsboro. The president highlighted the base's important role in his public address: "Air superiority is an established fact, and the Iraqi Air Force is no longer a factor…I know this base…is very proud of the way that we have used air superiority to go after Saddam's 'missiles of terror.' Our troops will not be asked to accomplish the mission with on hand tied behind their backs."[165] Regarding the visit, President Bush later recalled:

> Next was Seymour Johnson Air Force Base at Goldsboro, also in North Carolina, home of the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing and the 68th and 916th refueling units. There the emotion, and my reaction to it, was just as strong. Once again I tried to get through my text without breaking down. It is hard to do when they play "The Star-Spangled Banner" or when they salute you and hold up signs, or when you see a child mouthing the words "Bring my dad home safe."
>
> I was scheduled to meet with two wives whose husbands were missing and two whose husbands were POWs. I felt bolstered by the courage of these four women, and the fact that they didn't cry. All the families I met said the same thing: my husband, my dad knows what he's doing there. He's doing what he has to do for his country. There wasn't one different voice raised and I didn't see one sign of protest anywhere or hear one complaint. Again, I felt emotionally drained but uplifted.[166]

[165] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing in Southwest Asia (Desert Shield/Storm), August 1990-June 1991, Vol 2, p. 90, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[166] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 465.

Tank Plinking

The Commander in Chief and senior military leaders wanted to degrade the Iraqi military not only to protect the coalition ground forces that were soon to move into Iraq and Kuwait, but to ensure that Saddam, should he survive the war, would be unable to carry out further acts of aggression in the region.[167] The president felt political pressure to launch the ground campaign sooner rather than later, but Schwarzkopf needed time to make sure the ground forces were properly positioned and ready to execute the sweeping left hook through the desert of Iraq. When Colin Powell met with Schwarzkopf in the Gulf on 9 February the two determined the ground war would begin on 21 February. Later, it was delayed until 24 February to give the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions the opportunity to shift their point of attack to the west to capitalize on an abandoned Iraqi defensive position.[168]

In these weeks prior to the ground invasion, Scud patrols still occupied almost half of the available F-15Es, but the remainder began to shift focus to the Iraqi armor and artillery that was positioned in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO). The mission, coined by Major Cliff Smith as "tank plinking," consisted mostly of two-ship formations.[169] Each aircraft carried a targeting pod and eight GBU-12s [500-pound laser-guided bombs], and engaged various pieces of military equipment from medium altitude, near 20,000 feet. Although it is now a widely used employment method for LGBs, the tactic was initiated approximately halfway through the air war and had not been previously developed or tested. The medium altitude LGB deliveries turned out to be very successful. The threats posed from surface to air weapons had also begun to subside, which was a welcome break from the SA-2s, SA-3s and large AAA near the big cities. The reduced threat level could also be dangerous, however, in that it tended to breed complacency or overconfidence. One crew from the Chiefs were reminded of the continuing dangers after nearly being hit by an SA-8 mobile SAM that was embedded with the Iraqi army.[170] These missions were shorter than Scud patrol sorties with a large number of targets among the dug-in Iraqi army positions; the attacks also contributed

[167] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 464.
[168] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 514.
[169] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 178.
[170] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 177–83.

directly to the security of the coalition ground forces that were preparing to sweep into Iraq and Kuwait. Before the ground invasion began, roughly 100,000 Iraqis had already surrendered to coalition forces, and many attributed their defection to the ceaseless air strikes.[171]

The 100-Hour War

After giving Saddam one final opportunity to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all forces from Kuwait by noon on Saturday, 23 February, the ground war commenced. The following day, at 0400 Riyadh time, U.S. Marines and an Army tank brigade crossed into Kuwait in the morning darkness and a chilling rain. They were followed by Saudi, Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Syrian, and other Arab troops in the coalition. XVIII Airborne Corps jumped off with the 82d Airborne Division far to the west, accompanied by a French armored division to cover the left flank. The 101st Airborne Division and 24th Infantry Division advanced due north into Iraq. Between these arrayed forces, VII Corps and the British 1st Armored Division were prepared to throw the left-hook main attack after the supporting attacks fixed the Iraqi positions.[172]

Persistent air strikes also kept the Iraqi army fixed, and enemy forces were blindsided by the coalition's rapid flanking maneuver to the west. On the first day, General Barry McCaffrey's 24th Infantry Division penetrated sixty miles into Iraqi territory. Thanks in large part to the unending aerial bombardments they had undergone, ten thousand exhausted Iraqi soldiers surrendered during the first twenty-four hours of land combat, while the total coalition casualties that day were eight dead and twenty-seven wounded.[173] The F-15Es supported the ground movements by striking enemy targets in kill boxes—thirty nautical mile square areas that could be opened or closed to deconflict fires from both air and land assets. Friendly ground forces were moving so quickly that they were getting ahead of projections for air cover. Captain Jim Henry said, "I came in the second night and Lieutenant Del Toro, our intel officer, went up to the board where they had the plastic markers for the army units—all the groups and battalions. I saw him clean off this huge portion of the board in five minutes. It was the

[171] Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), x.
[172] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 517.
[173] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 518.

northwest area of the KTO…. He said, 'these guys are gone; they have been overrun. They have surrendered, or been captured.' Standing there looking at the board, you could just see the gigantic thing going on."[174]

Both the Rockets and Chiefs continued to fly Scud patrol during the ground invasion as well. Finding the launchers at any point in time, let alone before they launched their missiles, proved to be a nearly impossible task. Sadly, one Scud got through Patriot missile defenses on the second day and hit a makeshift military barracks near Dhahran, killing twenty-eight American soldiers.[175] It was the worst loss of American or coalition forces during the war. While the Scud hunting efforts increased pressure on the Iraqi army and logistics efforts, the air patrols and special operations forces on the ground were insufficient to stop all of the Scuds, which continued launching at a reduced rate until the end of the war.

On 26 February, the third day of the invasion, Schwarzkopf became concerned that VII Corps was not moving in fast enough from the west. Their job was to cut off any fleeing Iraqi armor from the KTO, but they were not yet in position to block the highway that ran north to Basrah. As the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force continued to move north, the Iraqi III Corps had piled all the loot it could carry into tanks, trucks, buses, ambulances, and stolen cars to flee north into Iraq. Weather was deteriorating with low ceilings and numerous thunderstorms in the area as nightfall came. An E-8 JSTARS detected the massive movement to the north, and when word got to Riyadh, Horner and Glosson realized the F-15E was the only platform with a good chance of penetrating the weather at night to stop these forces. Glosson called the 4th Wing Commander, Colonel Hornburg, and requested Strike Eagles to launch immediately.[176] Hornburg's DO, Colonel Bull Baker, said, "he flat out told me that this was an emergency situation and that he had sent three different sets of air in and they couldn't get through the weather. The clouds were at 1,500 feet solid to 25 or 30 [thousand] with massive thunderstorms embedded in the clouds. The A-6s and F-111s couldn't get down through the weather to bomb and the F-16s had to drop on coordinates. What was worrying Glosson was that

[174] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 187.
[175] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 518.
[176] James Kitfield, *Prodigal Soldiers* (New York: Potomac Books, 1995), 412–13.

those guys could have escaped across the Euphrates, then dispersed, and the war could drag on for another two weeks."[177]

Sixteen F-15Es, including two four-ships of Rockets, launched with CBU-87 cluster munitions to strike the convoy before it reached Mutla Pass. Once in the vicinity of the road, the crews mapped the vehicles with air-to-ground radars, and prepared for weapons delivery. McIntyre said, "it appeared our radars were malfunctioning. There was just too much metal down there. The [radar] returns didn't look right. It shocked us all when we realized that, yes, what you see is actually what is down there."[178] While simultaneously dodging thunderstorms in the area, the Rockets alone employed a total of ninety-six canisters of CBU-87 to stop the Iraqi forces that night.[179] The F-15Es targeted the front and rear of the convoy, leaving the remaining vehicles without an avenue of escape. Chuck Horner launched further strikes the next morning after the weather cleared, but a vast majority of the vehicles had already been abandoned by the Iraqi army. By the end of the following day, the four-lane highway from Kuwait City to Basrah was filled with the remnants of fifteen hundred military and civilian vehicles. Later in the day, television reporters began referring to the road as the "Highway of Death."[180] The F-15E sorties to halt the Iraqi forces were crucial in meeting the military objective of degrading Iraq's offensive capabilities. The Rockets had accomplished the mission in extremely challenging conditions, when no other aircraft was up to the task.

After receiving reassurances from Powell and Schwarzkopf that the coalition forces had accomplished all their objectives, President Bush elected to end the conflict exactly at the 100-hour point, at midnight Zulu time, early morning on 28 February in Riyadh. He did not want any appearance of carrying on hostilities unnecessarily after the Iraqi army was no longer resisting. The final night of Strike Eagle sorties before cease-fire was anticlimactic, as the squadron was again on duty in western Iraq to stand guard against any last volley of Scuds launched toward Israel. All was quiet.

The president spoke to the nation at 9:00 pm in Washington, shortly after the cease-fire went into effect:

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[177] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 188.
[178] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 191.
[179] Smallwood, *Strike Eagle*, 192.
[180] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 520.

> Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met. Kuwait is once more in the hands of Kuwaitis, in control of their own destiny. We share in their joy, a joy tempered only by our compassion for their ordeal…. Seven months ago, America and the world drew a line in the sand. We declared that the aggression against Kuwait would not stand. And tonight, America and the world have kept their word. This is not a time of euphoria, certainly not a time to gloat. But it is a time of pride: pride in our troops; pride in the friends who stood with us in the crisis; pride in our nation and people whose strength and resolve made victory quick, decisive, and just…. No one country can claim this victory as its own. It was not only a victory for Kuwait but a victory for all the coalition partners. This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, and for what is right.[181]

Scud Hunt Results

Because of its air-to-ground sensor capabilities, the Strike Eagle was the platform most affected by the requirements of the Scud hunt; the 391 anti-Scud missions flown comprised nearly 20 percent of F-15E sorties by the end of the war.[182] During the conflict, coalition aircrew from all platforms claimed approximately 80 mobile launchers destroyed, in addition to the 9 to 11 claimed by U.S. SOF.[183] The overwhelming majority of those claims now appear to have been either decoys, vehicles with similar dimensions such as tanker trucks, or other objects with the shape and appearance of Scuds. After the conflict, it remained impossible to confirm whether any mobile launchers at all had been destroyed by coalition aircraft.[184] Yet, it is probable that the Iraqis had greater difficulty firing their missiles amid the disruption of the air campaign. Forty-nine Scuds were fired in the first ten days, but that quantity fell to a total of only thirty-nine launches in the remaining thirty days of the war, for a total of eighty-eight launches during the war.[185] Tactically, the Scud hunt revealed the immense challenges in finding and tracking mobile targets in a vast desert.

The larger point, however, becomes clear in the political context of the war. Despite the tactical and operational challenges of the Scud hunt, the efforts undertaken in the air helped achieve the strategic objective of convincing the Israelis to remain out of

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[181] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 486.
[182] "GWAPS Vol IV," 45.
[183] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 330–31.
[184] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 330–31.
[185] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 191.

the conflict. Militarily, the outcome of the war was never in question, so Saddam tried to win the only way he could—in the political sense.[186] In a television interview on 27 March 1991, Schwarzkopf said, "there was no question about the fact that, had Israel entered the fray [in response to the first Scud attacks], I don't think we could have held [the Coalition] all together."[187] Colin Powell observed, "sometimes we fight with fury; sometimes the wisest weapon is restraint. Prime Minister Shamir showed a special brand of statesmanship in resisting heavy pressure from those around him to strike back."[188] Despite the operational and tactical failures to hit the launchers themselves, the nightly Strike Eagle Scud hunts served as a political justification for Israeli restraint, enabling a strategic win for the coalition.

Evidence from World War II and Desert Storm suggests that future counter-ballistic missile efforts will require more determined joint efforts. Current short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) capabilities possessed by potential adversaries far exceed those of the V-2s and Scuds in both accuracy and the ability to be dispersed and concealed. The effects of the V-1s and V-2s generated heated debates in the British House of Commons; even while the ultimate objective was to defeat Germany, the missile attacks diverted significant levels of airpower during Operation Crossbow. The low casualty rate from the Scud attacks in Israel was both extremely fortunate and notable: only one person was killed as a direct result of the missiles, while eleven more died from indirect causes, and 230 were wounded.[189] Had the Iraqis possessed weapons with only marginally greater accuracy, their political and military impact would have increased vastly.[190] The political value of the Scuds could also have increased due to pure chance; if a missile had struck a more populated area within Israel, the coalition would have been forced to grapple with a much more significant political problem.

These factors combine to suggest that even greater military efforts will be required in the future to address SRBM threats. Like Operation Crossbow and the Scud hunt, counter-ballistic missile efforts will continue to burden airpower assets, with mobile

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[186] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 180.
[187] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 179.
[188] Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, 512.
[189] Stanley A. Renshon, *The Political Psychology of the Gulf War: Leaders, Publics, and the Process of Conflict* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 228.
[190] "GWAPS Vol II: Part I," 338.

threats creating the greatest diversionary effect.[191] Military strategists should anticipate potentially higher military and civilian casualties and stronger political pressure in the event of future missile attacks; an increased draw on operational assets in support of ballistic missile counterair activities is also to be expected.[192] The U.S. does not currently have the ability to overcome the large diversion of air assets that would be necessary to counter a near-peer adversary that poses a mobile ballistic missile threat.[193]

The Rockets Return

The 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron returned to Seymour Johnson AFB in mid-March 1991. The squadron had been one of the first ones to deploy in August 1990. For them, the "100-hour war" was preceded by five months of challenging training in the desert and 39 days of war in the air. What most originally expected to be a one-month excursion to demonstrate American resolve had developed into an eight-month deployment and coalition operation backed by a UN mandate. During Desert Storm, the Rockets had flown 1088 combat sorties and dropped 6.5 million pounds of ordnance.[194]

When the first aircraft returned to Goldsboro on 15 March, the Rockets were greeted on the flight line by a crowd of over 3,000 family members and community friends along with much fanfare. They were also joined by Eberly and Griffith, who had been released from their Iraqi prison in early March and were flown to the base along with the returning squadron.[195] After spending the first days at home with their loved ones, members of the squadron spoke at public venues, including schools and service clubs. They were interviewed by a friendly and admiring media corps, demonstrating how far the American military had come from a public relations standpoint since Vietnam. Victory parades of the likes not seen since 1945 were thrown in Washington, Chicago, and New York City. Although the Gulf War was not on a level with the Second World War, the feeling of national unity indicated it was certainly not another Vietnam.

The significance of Desert Storm went beyond reversing Saddam Hussein's aggression and restoring Kuwait. It demonstrated the American military's technological

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[191] Anderson, "The Air Campaign vs. Ballistic Missiles," 47.
[192] Kipphut, "Theater Missile Defense," 35-53.
[193] Anderson, "The Air Campaign vs. Ballistic Missiles," 63.
[194] Davis, *4th Fighter Wing in Korean War*, 209.
[195] 4th Tactical Fighter Wing in Southwest Asia (Desert Shield/Storm), August 1990-June 1991, Vol 2, p. 79, K-WG-4-HI, IRIS No. 0883916, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

superiority over the Soviet military equipment and defensive systems of the Iraqi forces, as well as the importance of new airpower capabilities in stealth and precision weapons. In the president's mind, the conflict also renewed precedents for employing military force with broad domestic support, and served as a post-Cold War model for the international use of force against aggression. It was an American-led and internationally supported action that would serve to dissuade would-be aggressors in the future.[196]

Yet, outcomes in war are never final.[197] Hitler's rise in Germany after the 'war to end all wars' proved that, and when the Gulf War ended, Saddam Hussein maintained his grip on power. The Rockets would soon be back in the Middle East for Operation Southern Watch in Iraq; the squadron would continue to journey to the region for decades to come, maintaining a U.S. presence to this day. After the terrorist attacks in America on 11 September 2001, the squadron would be called on to conduct Operation Noble Eagle missions in the homeland, fly combat missions in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and return to Iraq in January 2003 for Operations Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom.

For the Rockets, close air support missions would dominate the ongoing war on terror after the 'Shock and Awe' campaign in 2003, and F-15E aircrew would pride themselves on supporting coalition ground force commanders. The Rockets would sadly lose two more of their own, Captains Mark R. McDowell and Thomas J. Gramith, when their aircraft impacted the ground in an isolated Afghanistan valley on 18 July 2009. After participating in contingency operations in the Horn of Africa region, the squadron would return yet again to Iraq in 2014-15 and 2017-18 to counter the rise of a new terror, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). For the squadron members in the spring of 1991, however, all those events were still unimaginable and yet to come. The Rockets had just fought to win the Gulf War and further the cause of justice over aggression, and for now, they could appreciate the peace.

[196] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 490–91.
[197] Clausewitz, *On War*, 80.

Conclusion

The history of the 336th Fighter Squadron began with Great Britain's political stand against a rash leader bent on dominating the European continent. Led by Winston Churchill, Britain challenged Hitler's aggression, vowing to resist in every way it could until victory was achieved. Churchill's immediate objectives of ensuring national survival, maintaining Britain's belligerence, and securing American involvement in the war served as the political background in which the Eagle Squadrons were created. After Charles Sweeny's concept became a reality, the recruiting efforts of Sweeny and Clayton Knight contributed to the high volume of American recruits that made Number 133 Squadron possible. The squadron served a crucial political role by inspiring future American aviators while solidifying domestic support for the war. In Northern Ireland, they watched over their future squadron mates and Lend-Lease shipments inbound by sea to Britain. At Biggin Hill, they learned how to fight and win in aerial combat with the Luftwaffe. At Morlaix, the squadron learned the dangers of combat aviation the hard way, losing almost the entire squadron in a single day. Led by Carroll McColpin and Don Blakeslee, the squadron picked itself up again and carried on.

RAF Number 133 transferred to the USAAF and became the 336th Fighter Squadron on 29 September 1942. The 4th Fighter Group was comprised of the 334th, 335th, and 336th Fighter Squadrons, each of the original Eagle Squadrons. Ironically, these aviators who had never qualified in the USAAF for a variety of reasons quickly became the irreplaceable core of American fighter experience in Britain.[1] The squadron had already contributed to Britain's political objectives, helped align American objectives with the cause of the Allies, and would continue to serve in support of President Roosevelt's objective of Germany First. The USAAF duly gave them their American silver wings, and relied on their experience to lead the way in air combat in Europe and in training new pilots in the United States.

In early 1944, the pilots of the 336th set their sights on the Luftwaffe in earnest and went on to achieve air supremacy and safeguard the Allied return to Europe on D-Day. They strengthened America's alliances in shuttle missions to Russia, which also

[1] Caine, *American Pilots in the RAF*, 334.

demonstrated the capability of America's military power to the Soviets while attacking German industrial targets from multiple axes. The squadron defended British and American bombers as they destroyed German V-1 and V-2 ballistic missile sites, thereby mitigating Hitler's final opportunity for revenge on the civilian population of Britain. Their support against the V-weapons in Operation Crossbow addressed political concerns about civil defense in Britain. As the air threat began to subside, the pilots of the 336th finished off the Luftwaffe on the ground with strafing attacks, at increased risk to themselves, to help guarantee its total destruction and Germany's capitulation. The squadron's combat actions achieved Roosevelt's political objectives of Germany First and the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers.

After picking up the official name and emblem of the Rocketeers while flying F-80s at Andrews Field, the squadron deployed for combat operations in the F-86 in Korea from 1950-53, and in the F-4E in Vietnam from 1972-73. The Rockets again deployed to Oman and Saudi Arabia in 1990. Their actions in the Gulf War supported the American political objectives of an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, achieving security and stability in the Gulf, and protecting American lives. The 336th also dissuaded Israeli military action through their employment in the Scud-hunt campaign. Thanks to the squadron's efforts, American political leaders were able to confidently assert that U.S. forces were accomplishing everything the Israelis would be capable of achieving through military action of their own. Israel's restraint in the face of Iraq's attacks upheld the coalition with strong backing from western and Arab nations. While the Rockets' Scud-hunting mission was less significant tactically than its other strike missions against Iraqi infrastructure and fielded forces, its primary contribution was strategic; the Scud hunt directly attacked Saddam's strategy to undermine the coalition through a political linkage to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Airpower as a Political Instrument

The experience of the 336th Fighter Squadron reveals insights into the employment of airpower to achieve political aims. First, because war itself springs from a political purpose,[2] the very formation and organization of military units can be based not only on combat or organizational effectiveness, but on other political goals as well.

[2] Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

Such were the unique circumstances for Number 133 and the other Eagle Squadrons in Britain. The RAF could have opted to bring in American volunteers and disperse them throughout the existing British squadrons, as they had done previously during the Battle of Britain. From an organizational efficiency perspective, that is probably what the RAF should have done. The American volunteers were a rowdy group, and the Brits assigned specially-selected RAF intelligence officers and pilots to oversee and command the Eagle Squadrons initially. Yet, the political value of these units was vastly more important, and the support they generated from an increasingly interested population in the United States addressed Winston Churchill's objective of gaining American support for the war. The fact that the Eagles were already involved in combat operations early in 1941 led to even more aviation cadet volunteers prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Britain's use of Number 133 Squadron both for direct military action and to draw American support demonstrated the importance of strategic audiences during a conflict and their effect on strategy. These audiences which can influence strategy are varied and can be participants in the war or external observers.[3] British historian Sir Michael Howard aptly described this concept, of which the Eagle Squadrons were a critical part: "The genius of Winston Churchill in 1940 was to devise a strategic narrative that not only inspired his own people, but enlisted the support of the United States: indeed, most of British military operations in the early years of the war were planned with an eye on that strategic audience."[4] In this instance, military activity was conducted in such a manner as to draw in an important ally. In the case of the Russian shuttle bombing missions, airpower employed against Germany was also intended to send a twofold message to the Soviet leadership. The squadron's mission to Russia strengthened the cooperative alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union while also demonstrating America's military superiority, which would become important for the nation's political standing in post-war Europe. While the squadron drew the Americans in during WWII, it acted to keep the Israelis out during the Gulf War. The actions of the 336th in the Scud hunt were directed toward Israel as a strategic audience, in order to justify that nation's

[3] Emile Simpson defined strategic audiences as "groups of people whom strategy seeks to convince of its narrative." He considered the concept distinct from Clausewitz's notion of polarity—that strategic audiences were contained entirely within the two opposing sides. Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, 62.
[4] Sir Michael Howard's introduction in: Simpson, Emile, *War from the Ground Up*, xvi.

restraint, thereby securing coalition unity. Policy overrode tactical efficiency. These strategic audiences explain the rationale for some of the squadron's tasks more fully by showing the political impacts on actors other than the adversaries.

A second political consideration is that national leaders have often turned to airpower as an initial military option in international crises. Prior to the Second World War, Roosevelt's strategy was to contain Nazi expansionism from afar by increasing American aircraft production to bolster the French and British forces. Despite the bureaucratic resistance and lengthy timetable for mobilization, the president looked to airpower as a first instrument in lending support. Airpower is often the first military option considered because it is the only option available. From a geographical standpoint, airpower was Germany's only option to initiate an attack on Britain after her evacuation from Europe at Dunkirk. The threat posed by the Luftwaffe and Britain's need for pilots ensued, and a resulting solution was Charles Sweeny's Eagle Squadron concept. In the same manner, the air weapon provided the initial retort of the Allies in Europe after the American entry into the war.

After WWII, airpower proved an even more responsive instrument to requests from political leaders. Following the squadron's short-notice deployment in the Korean War, the 336th returned to Korea in the wake of the seizure of the American intelligence ship *Pueblo* on 23 January 1968. The wing was alerted three days after the incident, and began moving personnel and resources the following day. Within a week, three fighter squadrons were at Kunsan Air Base, Korea. In response to the North Vietnamese Army's 1972 Easter Offensive, the 336th was alerted on 5 April and flew its first combat sortie in Vietnam nine days later. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on 1 August 1990, President Bush phoned King Fahd of Saudi Arabia the very next day to offer him an F-15 squadron.[5] The 336th was alerted on 7 August and departed for Oman less than 48 hours later. When it comes to providing military options for contingency operations, the immediate deployment of airpower is the norm rather than the exception.

Third, although airpower was tactically less effective against the missile threats during WWII and Desert Storm, it achieved the strategic effects necessary to counter the adversary's strategy. In 1944, Hitler's strategy was to create the political pressure to

[5] Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 321.

divert significant resources away from the primary theater of operations. Churchill's political challenge was to address domestic concerns while keeping focused on defeating the Germans. Although air strikes did not halt the launches, they addressed the threat with the only means available to do so. The political purpose of Operation Crossbow drove the continued bombing effort of the launch sites even after some of the air leaders, like Spaatz, questioned the allocation of sorties that could have attacked more militarily significant targets. Addressing homeland vulnerabilities amid mounting civilian casualties remained a top priority for civilian officials, however, and airpower provided the only option until ground forces overtook the launch sites.

The squadron's operations during Desert Storm were governed by similar logic. Yet, rather than allowing the state subjected to missile attacks to unleash its military, the Scud patrols allowed Israel to restrain from all military action. The tactics of the Iraqi army posed the problem of finding and targeting mobile launchers. The use of ground forces was again required to force the enemy out of missile range. Like Spaatz in WWII, Schwarzkopf and Horner discounted the political value of the ballistic missiles, and had to make significant adjustments to the air plan to address those implications. Despite the tactical dilemma of finding these 'needles in a haystack,' the political value of the strikes on fixed Scud targets and the airborne alerts remained the primary consideration. The effort expended in pursuit of the Scuds was not the most efficient use of the F-15E, but it achieved the desired political effect. Despite the relatively small number of casualties suffered, the pressure on Israeli leadership to respond to the Scud attacks was great. The highest potential for an Israeli response was during the first week of the attacks. Yet, Strike Eagles were already on patrol at that time, and restraint proved a prudent strategy for Israel. The longer the Israelis refrained from responding to the missile attacks on their homeland, the greater the strategic advantage gained by Israel and the coalition, and the more reckless Saddam's actions appeared to the entire world. The efforts of the Rockets caused Saddam's most viable political strategy to backfire.

A final consideration apparent in the 336th Fighter Squadron's history is that there is no finality to military outcomes in war, whether achieved through airpower or

any other military means.[6] After the First World War, Hitler ignited German aggression and instigated another global conflagration that brought Number 133 into existence. While Korea's borders remain the same since 1953, North Korea's potential nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities now threaten the region and beyond. North Vietnam conquered the South in 1975, after America's negotiated peace. Saddam Hussein's iron grip on power in Baghdad allowed him to claim victory in the Gulf War at home, and by the fall of 1992, an Iraqi television program was again claiming that "Kuwait was, is, and always will be, part of Iraq."[7] The 336th helped to finally silence Saddam in 2003, yet has since continued to deploy to the Middle East as a part of America's ongoing effort to counter global terrorism.

World-Famous Rocketeers

The story of the 336th Fighter Squadron is one of individuals united toward a common purpose in service to the nation. In the process, those individuals formed something altogether new. Some squadron members stand out in written histories for one reason or another, yet most do not. They are a quiet majority: skillful yet modest; honorable but not honor-seeking; courageous but not rash. Each one is essential in the making of a cohesive team, and each squadron member contributes to the unit's morale, dedication, and fighting spirit. The squadron, made up of individuals, and led by a good commander, becomes a source of identity and pride for Airmen as it fulfills the purposes of the nation.

The analogy of a family is also appropriate. Military service in general, and life in the squadron in particular are more than simply a job or a mission. Today, the Rockets at Seymour Johnson AFB train to fight and win the nation's wars with their brothers and sisters, as they have done at that base for over 60 years, and just as they have done since the days at Debden. The character of war has changed significantly in that span of time. War is a human endeavor, however, and human nature is difficult, if not impossible to change. Combatants experience the chance and violence of war on a personal level, but

[6] Clausewitz, *On War*, 80. The authors of the Gulf War Air Power Survey also considered this point in: "Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume II: Part II, Effects and Effectiveness," 379-381.
[7] "GWAPS Vol II: Part II," 380.

the *reasons* for fighting can be more complex to grasp.[8] Political ideas have surrounded the employment of the 336th Fighter Squadron throughout its history; yet, policies and strategies are complex notions and often out of mind when one is engaged in combat. Thinking about the reasons for fighting and thinking during the act of fighting are two very different activities. If, as Clausewitz stated, "war should never be thought of as *something autonomous* but always as an *instrument of policy,*"[9] those deeper reasons which give logic to war and violence must then lie in the realm of political philosophy. Military leaders must appreciate that perspective. Yet, the warrior has little need for abstract thoughts when gunning an Me 109 on a wingman's tail over Germany, or dodging SAMs and AAA while bombing a Scud missile site in western Iraq. In these moments of combat, what remains is the enemy, the mission, your wingmen, your brothers and sisters, your squadron.

For almost eighty years, and across four continents, the 336th Fighter Squadron has fulfilled its role in achieving national objectives in war, from Hitler's 'unconditional surrender' to Saddam's 'unconditional withdrawal,' and beyond. More difficult to quantify, but no less certain is the measure of peace the Rockets' contributions have also yielded for America and the world. With the destructive capability of those great machines of war comes great responsibility for those who wield them. Perhaps one day, mankind can achieve a position of strength such that he will not only lay down the sword, but will break it, as German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and others have suggested.[10] In 1957, a terminally ill John Godfrey closed his book on a similar note of hope: "perhaps my battles will bear fruit for [my children]—for a life without war, hate, despair and disease."[11] Such desires are no doubt expressed in the wake of every period of human conflict. It is clear, however, that the common good of mankind must continue to be prudently defended.[12] Today, the men and women of the World-Famous Rocketeers carry on that noble task.

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[8] The elements of violence, chance, and reason make up Clausewitz's trinity that describes the nature of war. Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.
[9] Clausewitz, 88, 605-607.
[10] J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 225.
[11] Godfrey, *The Look of Eagles*, 245.
[12] Valpiani, "In Defense of the Common Good: Strategy, Ethics, and the Responsibilities of Command," 88.

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