

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, INC.

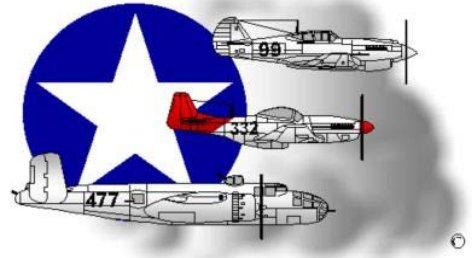
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MEDIA & PRESS KIT



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www.tuskegeearmen.org
www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/tuskegee

PRESS KIT

FACT SHEET

Tuskegee Airmen Inc.

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. (TAI) is a non-profit national organization, existing primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our nation's society and its democratic process. It also supports young men and women pursuing excellence, paying special attention to those interested in careers in aviation, technology and aerospace. Tuskegee Airmen Inc. is dedicated to keeping alive the history, achievements, and the importance of the original Tuskegee Airmen.

There are more than 50 active chapters of TAI located in major cities and military installations throughout the United States. The membership of TAI consists of civilians and veterans, as well as military personnel from all branches of the service.

Mission

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. strives to increase understanding of the ***Tuskegee Airmen "Experience"** by:

- Honoring the accomplishments and perpetuating the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, who participated in air and ground crew operations and in support roles in the Army Air Corps during World War II
- Introducing young people across the nation to the world of aviation and science through local and national programs such as the Young Eagles and TAI youth programs and activities
- Providing awards to deserving individuals, groups and corporations whose deeds lend support to TAI's goals

Where We Are

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. is headquartered in Tuskegee, Ala., where the training of black military pilots during World War II began.

The Tuskegee Institute's Division of Aeronautics and Moton Field were the only primary flight facilities for black pilot candidates in the U.S. Army Air Corps (Army Air Forces) during World War II. Moton field was named for Robert Russa Moton, the second president of the Tuskegee Institute and was built between 1940 and 1942.



Moton Field was the only primary flight facility for black pilot candidates in the U.S. [in the U.S.](#)

BRIEF HISTORY

The Tuskegee Airmen were dedicated, determined young men who enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps to become America's first black military airmen. They accepted the challenge during a time when many people thought that blacks lacked the intelligence, skill, courage and patriotism.

Three government initiatives happened between 1938 and 1940 and were instrumental in paving the way for blacks to participate in the nation's defense and for blacks to become military pilots.

In 1938, the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), a new flight training initiative sponsored by the federal government, was launched to increase the number of civilian pilots in the United States, who could possibly be used as potential military pilots, if needed. This program gave many black college students a chance to earn their private pilot license. Several black colleges, including Tuskegee Institute, participated in the program. However, learning to fly in the CPTP was different than becoming a military aviator in the Air Corps.

Then in 1940, the Selective Service and Training Service Act, was passed by U.S. Congress on Sept. 16, 1940, and was then signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This act also known as the Burke-Wadsworth Act and was the first peace-time draft in the United States' history.

Under the Burke-Wadsworth Act, all American males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five years had to register for the draft. The final version of the bill contained two provisions, 3(a) and 4 (a), that spoke to the discrimination question.

Section 3(a), stated - "*Within the limits of the quota determined...Any person regardless of race or color.....shall be afforded an opportunity to volunteer for induction...*" and 4(a) - "*In the selection and training of men under this Act, and in the interpretation and execution of the provision of this Act, there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color.*"

That same year, the War Department announced that the Civil Aeronautics Authority, in cooperation with the U.S. Army, would start the development of "colored personnel" for the aviation service, this paved the way for blacks to train as pilots and as vital support personnel.

These men came from every part of the country, with large numbers coming from the cities of New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit. Each one possessed a strong personal desire to serve the United States of America at the best of his ability.

The military selected the Tuskegee Institute to train pilots because of its commitment to aeronautical training.

The first aviation class with 13 cadets began July 19, 1941, with ground school training in subjects such as meteorology, navigation, and instruments. Successful cadets then transferred to the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) to complete the Army Air Corps pilot training. The Air Corps provided aircraft, textbooks, flying clothes, parachutes, and mechanic suits, while the Tuskegee Institute provided the facilities for the aircraft and personnel. Lt. Col. Noel F. Parrish served as the base commander from 1942-46.

Nine months later in March 1942, five of the 13 cadets in the first class completed the Army Air Corps pilot training program and earned their silver wings and became the nation's first black military pilots. They were second lieutenants Lemuel R. Custis, Charles DeBow, Mac Ross, George Spencer Roberts and Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., a West Point Academy graduate.

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. later became the leader of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and the first black to become general in the Air Force.

Three hundred and fifty-five of the pilots, who trained at the Tuskegee Army Flying School, served overseas with the 99th Pursuit Squadron (later the 99th Fighter Squadron) and the 332nd Fighter Group.

The 332nd Fighter Group officially activated on Oct. 13, 1942, at Tuskegee Army Air Field. The group consisted of the 301st Fighter squadron under Lt. Charles DeBow; the 302nd Fighter Squadron under Lt. William T. Mattison and the 100th Fighter under Lt. George Knox. (The 100th Fighter Squadron was initially commanded by Lt. Mac Ross until his appointment as the group's operations officer.)

In addition to training fighter pilots, Tuskegee also graduated a group of twin-engine pilots. They were assigned to the 477th Bombardment Group, who flew the B-25 Billy Mitchell, a twin engine-medium bomber. The group was activated with four squadrons: The 616th, 617th, 618th and the 619th Squadrons, however, the war against Japan ended before the 477th Group could be deployed overseas.

On 21 June 1945, Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. assumed command of the Group. The unit was re-designated the 477th Composite Group on June 22, 1945. On that same date, it gained the 99th Fighter Squadron, which became the fighter component of the composite group. In March 1946, the unit relocated to Lockbourne Army Air Base in Ohio. In July 1947, the 477th Composite Group that flew the B-25 Bomber ceased to exist and was deactivated and reorganized as reactivated 332nd Fighter Group, which later became the 332nd Fighter Wing.

Throughout their training at Tuskegee, no training standards were lowered for the pilots or for any of the others, who trained in the fields of operations, meteorology, intelligence, engineering, and medicine.

From 1941 through 1946 close to 1,000 pilots graduated from Tuskegee Army Air Field, receiving commissions and pilot wings. The black navigators, bombardiers and gunnery crews were trained at other selected military bases elsewhere in the United States. Mechanics were initially trained at Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, Ill. until facilities were in place in 1942 at TAAF.

“Tuskegee Airmen” include the men who were involved under the “Tuskegee Military Experiment” from 1941 to 1946. That “experiment” is now referred to as the “Tuskegee Experience,” by Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.

The Tuskegee Airmen “Experience” extends up until the year 1949, and includes all individuals, men and women at TAAF and other designated units or locations up until the desegregation of the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Air Base, Ohio.

The term “Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen” or “DOTA” was adopted by TAI and includes vetted personnel who were trained or stationed at TAAF during the period from 1941 to 1949. These members include bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all other personnel, black and white who supported the aircraft in the air or operations on the ground.



AFTER THE WAR

After the war in Europe ended in 1945, the black airmen returned to the United States and faced continued racism and bigotry despite their outstanding war record.

The Tuskegee program was expanded and became the center for black aviation, during World War II. TAAF continued to train new airmen until 1946, with women entering the program in several support fields.

Large numbers of black airmen elected to remain in the service, but because of segregation, their assignments were limited to the 332nd Fighter Group or the 477th Composite Group, and later to the 332nd Fighter Wing at Lockbourne Air Base. Opportunities for advancement and promotion were very limited and this affected morale. Nevertheless, black airmen continued to perform superbly.

During this period, many white units were undermanned and needed qualified people but were unable to get experienced black personnel because of the segregation policy. The newly formed United States Air Force began plans to integrate its units as early as 1947.

In 1948, President Harry Truman enacted Executive Order Number 9981, which directed equality of treatment and opportunity to all in the United States Armed Forces. This order, in time, led to the end of racial segregation in the military forces. This was also the first step toward racial integration in the United States of America.

The positive experience, the outstanding record of accomplishments and the superb behavior of the black airmen during World War II, and after, were important factors leading up to the historical social change that led to racial equality in America.

The “Tuskegee Experiment” achieved success rather than the expected failure. This is further evidenced by the elevation of three of these pioneers to flag rank; the late Gen. Daniel “Chappie” James, our nation’s first Black Four-Star General; Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., and Major Gen. Lucius Theus. Davis retired from the Air Force in 1970 as a Lieutenant General, and the senior black officer in the armed forces at that time. In 1998, some twenty years later, President Bill Clinton awarded General Davis his fourth star, in a historic pinning on ceremony, advancing him to full general.

The Tuskegee Airmen will live on forever in the pages of history because they accepted the challenge proudly, and succeeded in proving to the world that blacks could fly. While all along, displaying skill and determination, and suppressing their internal rage from humiliation and indignation caused by repeated experiences of racism and bigotry.

These men fought two wars - one against a military enemy force overseas and another one against racism at home.

SOME TUSKEGEE AIRMEN STATISTICS

- The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 1200 missions for the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons under 12th Air Force.
- The 332d Fighter Group under 15th Air Force flew at least 311 missions between June 1944 and May 1945.
- The 99th Fighter Squadron and the 332d Fighter Group had a total of 112 aerial victories during World War II.
- Ninety-six Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to members of the 332d Fighter Group or its squadrons.
- The 332d Fighter Group shot down enemy aircraft on 21 missions for 15th Air Force.
- The Tuskegee Airmen flew four different types of aircraft in combat; the P-40, P-39, P-47, and P-51.
- Four Tuskegee Airmen earned three aerial victory credits in one day (Joseph Elsberry, Clarence Lester, Lee Archer, and Harry Stewart)
- The 99th Fighter Squadron earned two Distinguished Unit Citations, and the 332d Fighter Group earned one after the 99th Fighter Squadron was assigned to it.

NOTEWORTHY

- The “Tuskegee Military Experiment” in 1941, is now referred to as the “**Tuskegee Experience**” by **Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.** The “Tuskegee Experiment,” was conducted by the U.S. War Department and the Army Air Corps from 1941-1946. It should not be confused with the “*Tuskegee Syphilis-Experiment*” that was conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) from 1932-1972. Both events occurred in Tuskegee, Ala. but at different locations.
- First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt traveled to Tuskegee Army Air Field in April 1941 and accepted an offer to fly with Charles A. “Chief” Anderson, a black pilot, who was the first black pilot instructor at the Tuskegee Army Air Field. The flight that Eleanor Roosevelt took catapulted the training at Tuskegee to the forefront.
- In 1945, members of the 477th Bombardment Group at Freeman Field Airfield near Seymour, Ind., were arrested in April of that year for trying to desegregate an “all-white” officer’s club at Freeman Field. Approximately, 100 black pilots attempted to integrate an all-white officers’ club. The incident resulted in 162 separate arrests of black officers, some of them twice. Three were court-martialed on relatively minor charges. One was convicted. To some, even though segregation in the military officially ended with the signing of the Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, the “Freeman Field Munity” was seen as the first step toward the integration of the armed forces.
- July 1, 1949, The 332d Fighter Group and its three fighter squadrons, the 99th, 100th, and 301st, were inactivated. Members of those organizations were reassigned to other organizations that became racially integrated.
- August 1995, Fifteen Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen officers, who were assigned to the 447th Bombardment Group at Freeman Army Airfield in Indiana, received official notification during a Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. Convention in Atlanta that all the officers involved in the incident at Freeman Field had their military records cleared of any reference to the Freeman Field Mutiny.
- March 29, 2007, The Tuskegee Airmen, as a group, were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President George W. Bush and the U.S. Congress in a ceremony inside the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol. The 300 airmen and widows, who attended the ceremony, received the recognition for all the estimated 16-19,000 participants of the “Tuskegee Experiment.”

2010 TAI POSITION STATEMENT - REGARDING THE “NEVER LOST A BOMBER TO ENEMY AIRCRAFT” STATEMENT

“The results from extensive research investigations, by several independent investigators in reviewing the records of the 332nd Fighter Group, and all other fighter groups of 15th Air Force, to include the 15th AF Bomber Wings and Groups, Missing Air Crew (MAC) Reports at the Air Force Historical Research Agency and the National Archives, revealed that some bombers were lost to enemy aircraft while being escorted by the 332nd Fighter Group during the period of June 1, 1944 to the end of the war. Regardless of these latest findings, the 332nd FG still had an outstanding combat record (that) inspired revolutionary reform in the (United States) Armed Forces.”

Furthermore, it is requested that all “Tuskegee Airmen” and other Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. members and personnel discontinue making any statement, which implies that the 332nd FG “Never lost a bomber to enemy aircraft.” And it is further recommended, for good public relations, they correct others that have been misinformed or who are making incorrect statements.”



MEMBERSHIP

Nearly thirty years of anonymity ended in 1972 with the founding of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. at Detroit, Michigan. Organized as a non-military and non-profit entity, Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. exists primarily to motivate and inspire young Americans to become participants in our nation's society and its democratic process.

TAI membership is open to all people. All TAI chapters embrace diversity and welcome women and men, of all races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientation, abilities and financial circumstances.

Help us continue the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, by contacting a Tuskegee Airman, Inc. chapter for information about membership.

Visit www.tuskegeeairmen.org/TAI_membership.html to locate a chapter near you.

DONATIONS AND PLANNED GIVING

Tuskegee Airmen Inc. is a non-profit organization with 501(c) (3) tax-exempt status. TAI also accepts gifts of stock, pledges through bequests, trusts, and other planned gifts.



TUSKEGEE AIRMEN MUSEUMS AND HISTORICAL SITES

Today the Tuskegee Airmen have several memorials in place to perpetuate the memory of who they were, why they were, and what they accomplished during and after the adverse conditions to which they were subjected, including

Memorial Park at the Air Force Museum
Wright-Patterson AFB
Dayton, Ohio

A statue of a Tuskegee Airmen in the Honor Park at the U.S.
Air Force Academy
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site
National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior
Moton Field in Tuskegee Visitor Center
Chappie James Avenue
Tuskegee, AL
<http://www.nps.gov/tuai/index.htm>

Tuskegee Heritage Museum
109 Westside Street
Tuskegee, AL

George Washington Carver Museum
Tuskegee University
Tuskegee, AL

Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site Quarter
The site quarter will be the last strike in the U.S. Mint's America the Beautiful Quarters Program. The coin will be the 56th and final coin in the series.

Sources:

- *The National Park Service website*
- *The Tuskegee Airmen Website*
- (Public Law 783, Sept16, 1940; War Department Press Release, Sept16, 1940; 99th Fighter Squadron summary history in the lineage and honors folder of the 99th Flying Training Squadron at the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell AFB, AL)
- (Alan L. Gropman, *the Air Force Integrates, 1945-1964* [Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1985], p. 243, and note from Dr. Gropman to Dr. Haulman, June14, 2010.
- (Maurer, *Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II*; Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*)
- Photos - www.nationalmuseum.af.mil
- <http://www.history.army.mil/>
- Law Library of Congress