

**48<sup>th</sup> Fighter/Bomber Group -**

On 15 January 1941, the United States Army Air Corps activated the 48th Bombardment Group (Light) at Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia. On the same date, the Air Corps assigned the group's operational units: the 55th, 56th, and 57th Bombardment Squadrons (Light) and the 9th Reconnaissance Squadron (Light). These activations resulted from the buildup of military forces known as the "First Aviation Objective," in which the Air Corps activated 54 combat groups to prepare for the looming Second World War.



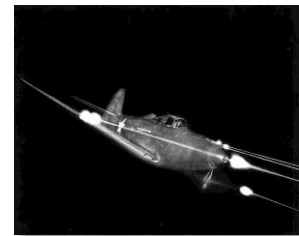
Initially the 48th and its four flying squadrons served as a training unit, preparing its pilots and maintenance crews for eventual combat. After training, many of the group's members went on to serve in squadrons stationed in Europe and the Pacific, while the 48th remained in the states. Over the next two years the group moved from Hunter Field to Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma, back to Savannah, Georgia, then on to Key Field, Mississippi; William Northern Field, Tennessee; and Walterboro Army Airfield, South Carolina. Initially the men of the 48th trained with A-20 and A-18 twin-engine attack, light bombers. After moving to Key Field, the group used A-24, A-31, A-35, and A-36 aircraft for training.



*P-40 Warhawk*

While at Key Field, on 15 August 1943, the group was redesignated the 48th Fighter-Bomber Group. The flying squadrons were redesignated the 492d, 493d, 494th, and 495th Fighter-Bomber Squadrons. Five days after these organizational changes, the 48th moved again, this time back to William Northern Field, Tennessee. With this move back to Tennessee, the 48th abandoned its training mission and served strictly as an operational unit, flying in maneuvers with its first fighters, the P-39 Airacobra and P-40 Warhawk.

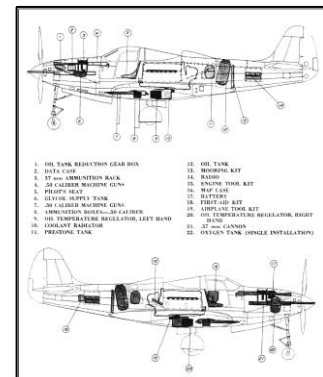
In early 1944, after years of training and flying across the US, the 48th returned to the East Coast to Walterboro, South Carolina, where 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James W. Harrison finally joined the combat team. At first the group conducted coastal patrol missions and training in the single-seat fighter it would use throughout World War II, the P-47 Thunderbolt. It was at this time that Lt. Harrison was temporarily assigned to the Ferry Command.



*P-39 Airacobra*

**Walterboro Army Airfield – Walterboro South Carolina - January 1944**

In the late 1920's and 1930's, a rough landing strip was made on the farm of C.C. Anderson just outside Walterboro. Starting in 1941, as part of the World War II effort, the U.S. Government acquired the site of the strip and assembled a total of 3,815 acres for the Walterboro Army Airfield.



Construction began in April 1942, and just four months later, on August 4, 1942, the base was activated. The completed installation consisted of a large airfield with extensive support facilities. Army Air Forces Fourth Service Command conducted combat air crew training. The Tuskegee Airmen were part of this effort. They were located near Tuskegee Circle, which is now the site of Walterboro High School.

Many notable objectives were completed here. Trained pilots and crews went directly to combat in many parts of the world. There was a compound for German prisoners of war. The largest camouflage school in the country was located here. Approximately 600 acres were used for bomb storage. Air combat support was provided from Walterboro for many important defense facilities and cities, such as Santee Cooper Dams, the Parris Island Marine Base, the Navy Yard, and Charleston. This was a very desirable airfield location because it had good flying weather and was beyond the range of hostile navy guns.

In 1942, Walterboro became home to the Walterboro Army Airfield, a sub-base of Columbia Army Airbase and part of the overall network of army air training facilities that sprang up across the United States during World War II. The base was established to provide advanced air combat training to fighter and bomber groups. It also hosted the largest camouflage school in the United States, as well as a 250 person Prisoner of War Camp.

In 1944 the South Carolina air field changed commands and became an advanced combat training base for individual fighters, primarily the black trainees graduating from Tuskegee Army Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama. Over 500 of the famed Tuskegee Airmen trained at Walterboro Army Airfield between April 1944 and October 1945 including individuals training as replacement pilots for the 332nd Fighter Squadron and the entire 447th Bombardment Group. Seven of the famous Doolittle Tokyo Raiders were also trained in Walterboro.



The base closed in October 1945 and returned to its origins as a local airfield.

### **Camp Shanks – March 1944**



After three months in South Carolina, the group moved up to Camp Shanks, New York and prepared for its embarkation to Europe. Camp Shanks was a United States Army installation in the Town of Orangetown in Rockland County, New York. Named after Major General David Carey Shanks (1861–1940), it was situated near the juncture of the Erie Railroad and the Hudson River. Camp Shanks served as a point of embarkation for troops departing overseas during World War II. Dubbed “Last Stop USA”, the camp housed about 50,000 troops spread over 2,040 acres (8.3 km<sup>2</sup>) and was the largest World War II Army embarkation camp, processing 1.3 million service personnel including 75% of those participating in the D-Day invasion. In 1945 Camp Shanks housed German and Italian prisoners of war.