

# Tuskegee Airmen Facts



**NOTE:** For historical photographs or information regarding the Tuskegee Airmen, contact: Maxwell Air Force Base by e-mail at [afhranews@maxwell.af.mil](mailto:afhranews@maxwell.af.mil) or write the Air Force Historical Research Agency, 600 Chennault Circle, Maxwell AFB, Ala. 36112-6424.

- The Tuskegee Airmen were dedicated, determined young men who volunteered to become America's first Black military airmen
- Those who possessed the physical and mental qualifications and were accepted for aviation cadet training were trained initially to be pilots, and later to be either pilots, navigators, or bombardiers.
- Tuskegee University was awarded the U.S. Army Air Corps contract to help train America's first Black military aviators because it had already invested in the development of an airfield, had a proven civilian pilot training program and its graduates performed highest on flight aptitude exams.
- Moton Field is named for Tuskegee University's second President, Dr. Robert R. Moton who served with distinction from 1915-1935. The Airmen were deployed during the presidential administration of Dr. Frederick Douglas Patterson (1935-1953).
- The all-Black, 332nd Fighter Group consisted originally of four fighter squadrons, the 99th, the 100th, the 301st and the 302nd.
- From 1941-1946, some 1,000 Black pilots were trained at Tuskegee.
- The Airmen's success in escorting bombers during World War II – having one of the lowest loss records of all the escort fighter groups, and being in constant demand for their services by the allied bomber units.- is a record unmatched by any other fighter group.
- The 99th Squadron distinguished itself by being awarded two Presidential Unit Citations (June-July 1943 and May 1944) for outstanding tactical air support and aerial combat in the 12th Air Force in Italy, before joining the 332nd Fighter Group.
- The 332nd Fighter group was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its' longest bomber escort mission to Berlin, Germany on March 24, 1945. During this mission, the Tuskegee Airmen (then known as the 'Red Tails') destroyed three German ME-262 jet fighters and damaged five additional jet fighters.
- The 332nd Fighter Group had also distinguished itself in June 1944 when two of its pilots flying P-47 Thunderbolts discovered a German destroyer in the harbor of Trieste, Italy.
- The tenacious bomber escort cover provided by the 332nd "Red Tail" fighters often discouraged enemy fighter pilots from attacking bombers escorted by the 332nd Fighter Group.
- C. Alfred "Chief" Anderson earned his pilot's license in 1929 and became the first Black American to receive a commercial pilot's certificate in 1932, and, subsequently, to make a transcontinental flight.
- Anderson is also well known as the pilot who flew Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of then-U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, convincing her to encourage her husband to authorize military flight training at Tuskegee.
- In 1948, President Harry Truman enacted Executive Order No. 9981 - directing equality of treatment and opportunity in all of the United States Armed Forces, which in time led to the end of racial segregation in the U.S. military forces.
- The U.S. Congress authorized \$29 million in 1998 to develop the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, with the University, Tuskegee Airmen Inc. and the National Park Service serving as partners in its development. To date, a mere \$3.6 million has been appropriated for the Site's implementation.

*Facts provided by Tuskegee Airmen Inc. and the Tuskegee University Office of Marketing and Communications.*

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian award presented by the U.S. Congress. It is awarded to an individual or group for an outstanding deed or act of service to the security, prosperity, and national interest of the United States. This medal was presented to the Tuskegee Airmen, African American pilots flying for the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II. The medal also includes other Tuskegee Airmen such as bombardiers, navigators, mechanics, and other military or civilian men and women who performed ground support duties. Awarded on March 29, 2007, the medal recognized their "unique military record that inspired revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces."

