

THE AVIATION MAGAZINE

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Volume 7, Issue 4



Celebrating the 100th Anniversary
of the LaFayette Escadrille

Special Edition

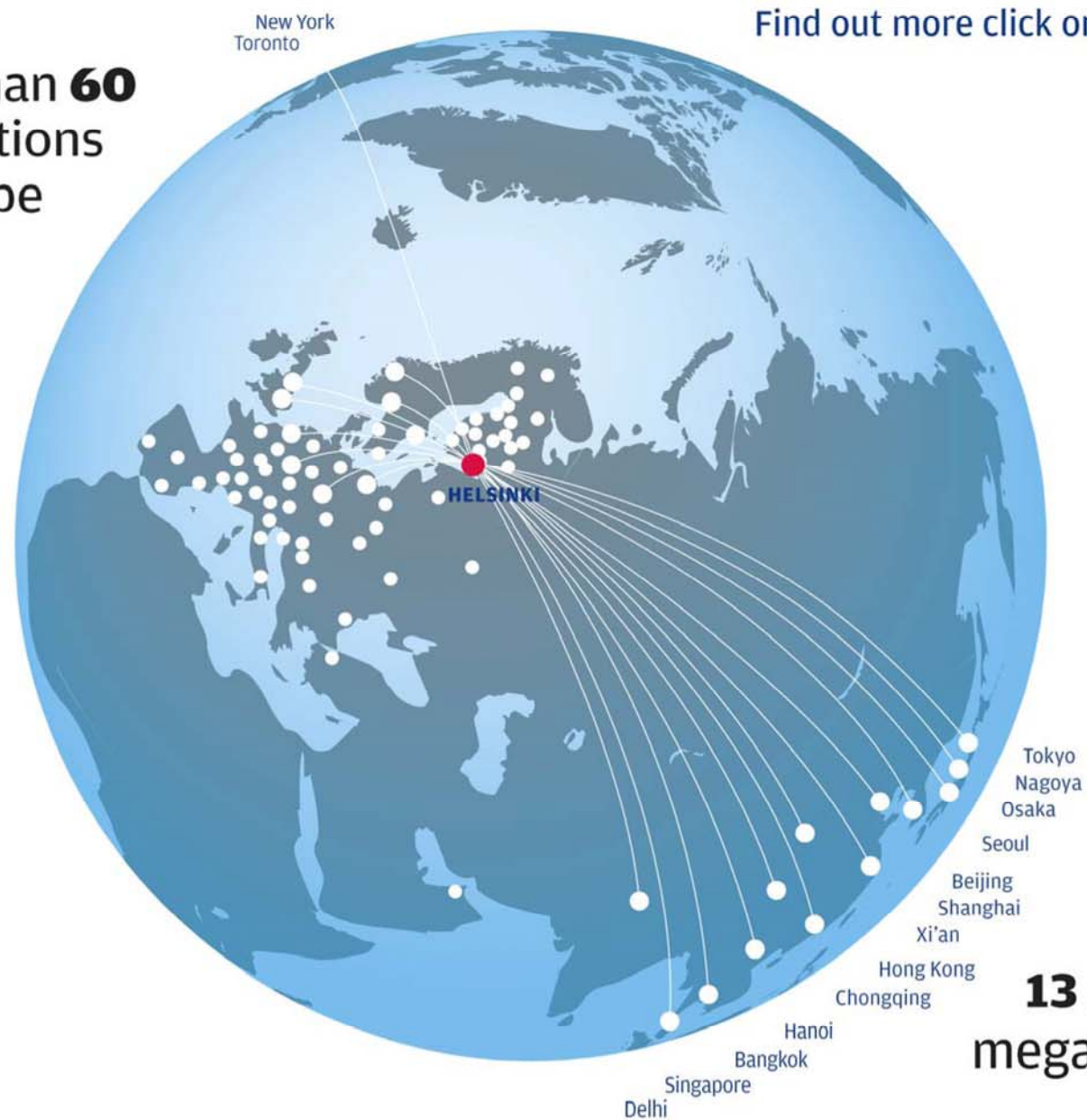
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Content:

- 5 News from the Editor
- 6 100th Anniversary Celebration of the La Fayette Escadrille
- 14 Mémorial Escadrille La Fayette
- 34 Aircraft of the La Fayette Escadrille during and after WWI
- 46 100th anniversary aircraft



Cover: Celebrating the Anniversary by the French Air Force, photo by A.Jeuland/Armée de l'air

Index page: The Anniversary paint scheme from above, photo by A.Jeuland/Armée de l'air



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AIR TO AIR



Photography by Laszlo
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THE AVIATION MAGAZINE

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THE AVIATION MAGAZINE is published six times a year, by a Team of Volunteers interested in aviation. We are devoted to cover a wide range of aviation events ranging from air shows, air base visits, military exercises, civilian spotting, pilot and veteran interviews all with exceptional photography. **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE** is a leader in the e-magazine format since 2009, bringing exclusive and fascinating reports to our global aviation enthusiasts digitally.

Please note: we do not accept any unsolicited articles or images for publication.

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NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our first 2016 special edition of **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE**. This time we are featuring one of the most famous squadrons in the world: Escadrille La Fayette, of the Armée de l'air.

Escadrille La Fayette on April 20th, celebrated their 100th year of service with the French Air Force. What makes the Escadrille La Fayette so special is that it was formed by American Flyers during WWI, and all the pilots were American, fighting on behalf of France, before USA entered the great war. Several books and even a Hollywood blockbuster movie "Flyboys" were inspired by the story of America's first fighter pilots. Men of the La Fayette Escadrille and Lafayette Flying Corps were critical to the formation of the U.S. Air Force.

We were lucky enough to receive fantastic air-to-air images of the current La Fayette fighter squadron or EC 2/4 from Armée de l'air with their specially painted Mirage 2000N as well as images from the annual celebration that takes place at the La Fayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, near Paris, France, every April 20th. The ceremony honors the 268 Americans who joined the French Air Force before the U.S. officially engaged in World War I. For 2016 three FAF Mirage 2000Ns one with the special livery, one FAF Rafale along with four USAF F-22s, flew past in formation, as well as a B-52 Stratofortress bomber and Stearman PT-17 biplane performed flyovers commemorating the 100th anniversary of the La Fayette Escadrille's formation. We would like to thank Lieutenant Stéphanie Dujardine, SIRPA AIR as well as Lieutenant Antonia Buroni, Officier Relations Publiques Équipes de présentation de l'armée de l'air 20.300 for their invaluable cooperation and help.

Once again we are able to bring you images that are rarely seen, for you to enjoy in the many more "Best for Free" ® e-based aviation magazine as we take you to aviation events "As close as you can get without being at an air show!" ® Tell all your friends to like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/theaviationmagazine), follow us for the latest reviews and news on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/theaviationmagazine) and to subscribe on [Joomag](https://www.joomag.com/) to automatically receive the latest issue of **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE**.



Celebrating the 100th Anniversary

1916-2016-100 YEARS

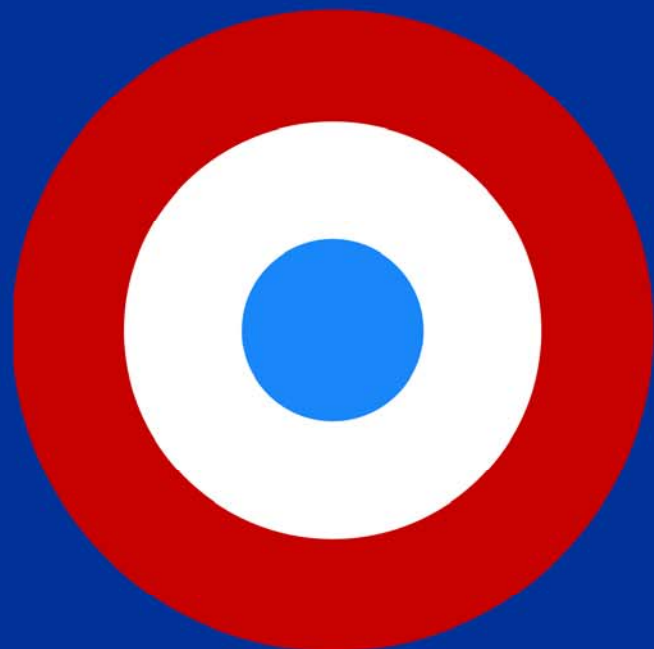


ARTICLE AND ARTWORK BY LASZLO NYARY WITH IMAGES AS NOTED
of the La Fayette Escadrille



The Mirage 2000N with special anniversary livery

©2016 A.Jeuland/Armée de l'air



100 years of history of the La Fayette Escadrille

The First World War, or the Great War, (WWI) began on 28 July 1914. WWI was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. On July 28, the Austro-Hungarians declared war on Serbia and subsequently invaded Serbia. The Russians supported Serbia and mobilized, the French were allies of Russia, as a result of this Germany, who was allied with the Austro-Hungarians, decided to invade neutral Belgium and Luxembourg before moving towards France, leading the United Kingdom to declare war on Germany. The alliances of powers became known as the Allies (based on the Triple Entente of the United Kingdom/British Empire, France and the Russian Empire) and as the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). In time additional countries joined these alliances — the war that was to end all wars.

Aviation was a recent event before the start of WWI. In December 1909, the French Department of War began to send army officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from all branches of the army, especially engineering and artillery, to undergo flying training at civilian schools as “pupil-pilots” (élèves-pilotes), including at places such as Reims and Bron. In March 1910, the Établissement Militaire d'Aviation (EMA) was created to conduct experiments with aircraft. The Aéronautique Militaire was created, as a branch of the Army, on October 22, 1910, under the command of General Pierre Roques. The training of military pilots was the same as civilian pilots until 1910 when the General Staff introduced the military pilot license. The military pilot badge N°1 was issued to Lieutenant Charles de Tricornot de Rose, who first completed all the military requirements. Lt. de Rose was trained in the Bleriot Flying School in Pau, in southwest of France, the city where the Wright Brothers had established the first aviation school in history just a year earlier. Eventually in 1912 Aéronautique Militaire formally became part of the armed forces.

France led the world in early aircraft design and by mid-1912 the Aéronautique Militaire had five squadrons (escadrilles). This had grown to 132 machines (21 escadrilles) by 1914, the same year when, on February 21, it formally came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War (Ministère de la Guerre). At the beginning of World War I, the Aéronautique Militaire concentrated on reconnaissance work, but on October 8, the commander-in-chief, General Barès, proposed a radical expansion to 65 squadrons and changes to the types of aircraft to be used for four different types of task: Morane-Saulniers would be used as fighters, Voisins as bombers, Farmans as reconnaissance aircraft, and Caudrons as artillery spotters.



Nieuport 17 (replica) displaying the Indian head associated with the La Fayette Squadron

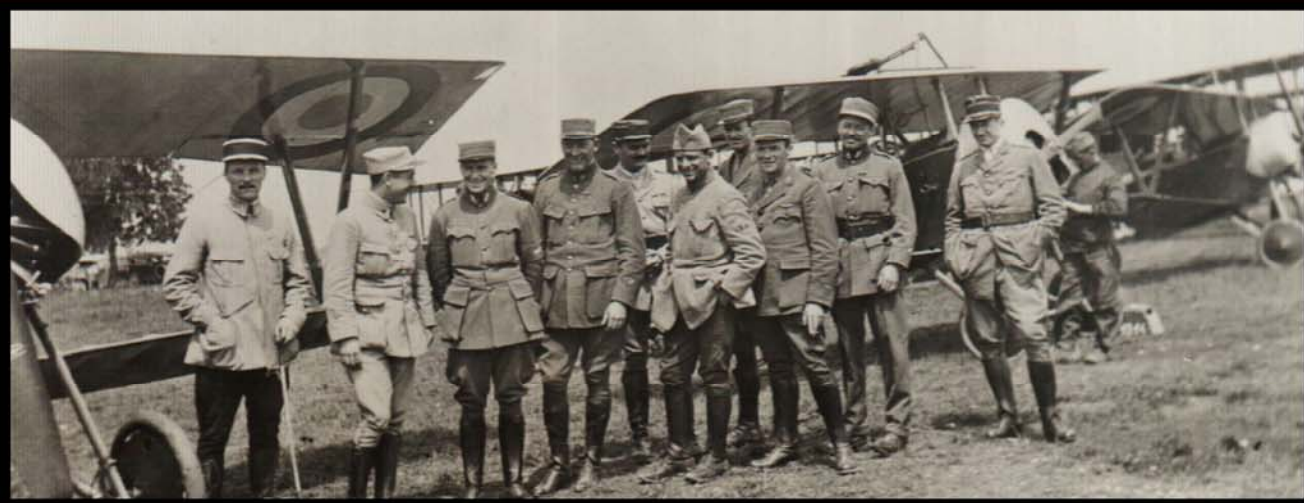
Air to air combat (dogfight) evolved slowly. The first recorded aerial victory was on October 5, 1914, when Sergeant Joseph Franz and his mechanic Caporal Louis Quénault, shot down a German Aviatik from their observation aircraft. The French aviator Roland Garros, had invented the fighter aircraft after he joined Service Aeronautique at the beginning of the war. He and aircraft designer Raymond Saulnier collaborated on his idea that with the addition of a forward-firing Hotchkiss machine gun mounted on the cowling of his Morane-Saulnier L with added deflector plates to the blades of the propeller (so that the wooden propeller would not be shot to pieces whenever he opened fire) the aircraft could be used as a weapon to bring down another aircraft. And it was Garros who achieved the first successful victory by an aircraft with a fixed forward firing machine gun. Thus Garros became the first fighter pilot and so the fighter aircraft was born.

Garros succeeded in shooting down three German aircraft, but one day his airplane developed a mechanical failure and this forced him to land behind the German lines. While he tried to destroy his Morane-Saulnier Type L after landing, the Germans recovered enough of the wreckage to evaluate the design and send it to their own designer, the Dutch Anthony Fokker. Fokker's new design became the first mass produced fighter monoplane: the Fokker Eindecker. Garros was captured, remaining a prisoner until his escape and return to the front. He was killed in action just a month before the armistice in 1918.

The fighter pilots became heroes and their fame circulated around the world, capturing the interest of young Americans and Canadians too, both rich and poor. Many of these young men headed off to Europe to join the fight against Germany: to become a hero or die trying to be one. Ladies wrote them, sent packages and gifts, swooning over these young aviators. However, their lifespan as an aviator for many was very short. Pilots flew in flimsy wooden planes held together by wires and covered in fabric, cramped cockpits without any armor and parachutes, engines and other parts failed, and machine-guns jammed when they were needed. If an aircraft caught on fire in a dogfight it was impossible to jump out, the only alternative was to be burned alive or to try landing the burning aircraft if possible at all. Some pilots fearing death by fire carried a pistol in case to shoot themselves if their aircraft ever caught fire. Despite the grave dangers of flying in combat the young American and Canadian aviators offered their volunteer services to Britain and France.

By 1915 a sufficient number of such American volunteers existed that the idea of an all-American unit began to take hold, the brainchild of three men: Dr. Edmund Gros, and two Americans already flying for France; Norman Prince and William Thaw.

Dr. Gros, an American physician living in France, was instrumental in persuading the French Government to form the Escadrille Americaine. Later, it was he who suggested its new name - Lafayette Escadrille.



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The American pilots of the La Fayette Escadrille (starting from 2nd person left): Chouteau Johnson, Lawrence Rumsey, James McConnell, William Thaw, Raoul Lufbery, Kiffin Rockwell, Didier Masson, Norman Prince, and Bert Hall

After the U.S. entered WWI, Dr. Gros was appointed Lt. Colonel and served as a liaison between the French and U.S. Army aviation authorities.

Norman Prince came from a wealthy background. When he was a child, he summered with his family at their estate in the French Pyrenees. He learned to fly at the Wright brothers' school in Georgia and soloed in 1911. Frederick Henry Prince disapproved of his son's aviation interests and forced the Harvard graduate into a law career in Chicago. The war gave young Prince an opportunity not only to find adventure but a way out.

William Thaw came from one of the 100 wealthiest families in the United States. In 1913 he soloed in a Curtiss hydroaeroplane, bought for him by his father. When the war began, he went to France and donated his aircraft, hoping to join the French air service. Initially he was not accepted to fly instead he ended up in the French foreign legion and fought in the trenches for months until the air service made him an observer. Despite bad eyesight, Thaw became an ace (five confirmed kills), and is probably the first American to fly in combat. It was Thaw, on leave in Paris, who acquired the first of two lion cubs, which became the squadron mascots. The first he named Whiskey; the second, Soda.

After intensive lobbying of the French authorities by the three for a squadron of American volunteer aviators their scheme was approved in August 1915. The French were hoping that such a squadron would entice the still-neutral United States to join the war. On April 18, 1916, squadron No.124 was established by the French Air Service with this in mind, and the Escadrille Américaine (American squadron) was officially sanctioned on 4th November 1916, as the Escadrille des Volontaires. The Germans protested regarding the national character of the name that violated U.S. neutrality, the French assigned it an official name: the La-fayette Escadrille, in honor of the French aristocrat and military officer who joined the Americans against the British in 1777.

On 6th of December 1916 it was renamed Escadrille La Fayette after Marquis de La Fayette. It would take until the following April before the squadron – the French Air Service's escadrille SPA. 124 or just N124 – was operational. But the Lafayette Escadrille had been born, named in fitting – and deliberately eye-catching manner.

The aircraft, mechanics and uniforms of the new unit may have been French, as was the commander, but the core of the group, later known as the "Valiant 38", were of American background and heredity.



Library of Congress

Whiskey (on hind legs) and Soda sitting on the lap; the lion mascots of N124

There were also two unofficial members, the mascots of the Escadrille Américaine, the lion cubs named Whiskey and Soda, who provided countless moments of relief from battle stress to fliers. La Fayette Escadrille N124, was initially commanded by the Frenchman Capt. Georges Thenault, in charge of seven American pilots: Victor Chapman, Elliot Cowdin, Bert Hall, James McConnell, Norman Prince, Kiffin Rockwell and William Thaw. Its inaugural flight mission took place on 13 May 1916 and the Escadrille's first aerial "kill" occurred five days later, when Sgt. Kiffin Rockwell claimed victory over a German two-seater L.V.G., on May 18, 1916. A Seminole Indian head was chosen by Capt. Thenault as the symbol for Escadrille La Fayette N124 but changed to a Sioux that was more menacing shortly thereafter.

The first of the pilots to be shot down was Clyde Balsley who ended up in a hospital and never flew after that. The first pilot to be killed in action from N124 was Victor Chapman on June 23rd, 1916, when he went up against five Fokkers—one of them possibly flown by the great ace and strategist Oswald Boelcke. Chapman's Nieuport was struck and came apart.

As their fame grew worldwide an increasing number of American volunteers sought adventure and service with N124. Their roster totalled thirty-eight Americans and five Frenchmen who flew over 3,000 combat sorties while assigned to the La Fayette Escadrille. The pilots faced a casualty rate of 30%, seven were killed and several wounded in aerial combat. Their impact was solid, if unspectacular: in 20 months, they had 42 confirmed victories and perhaps as many as 100 unconfirmed victories. Their highest-scoring ace was Raoul Lufbery with 16 kills, who later was killed in action with the 94th US Squadron. The squadron's true significance derived from its role as a symbol. By glorifying the La Fayette Escadrille, the French government in particular hoped to shift public opinion in the U.S. away from neutrality and toward active support for France. Although not all the applicants became members of the N124, many of them nevertheless passed through the La Fayette Flying Corps. About 200 Americans eventually passed through the French Air Service's training program.

After America's formal entry into the war the Escadrille passed into American hands in February 18, 1918, as the 103rd Pursuit Squadron. Most members of the La Fayette Escadrille initially opposed their transfer to the U.S. Air Service, and only seventeen of them joined the 103rd Pursuit Squadron. They questioned, for example, the qualifications of untested American airmen to command them. In contrast, General William Kelney, Chief of the Air Service, needed an experienced cadre of combat aviators and tried to



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James Norman Hall besides his Spad XIII in 1917, Escadrille La Fayette

waive all entry requirements that obstructed the transfer of the La Fayette Escadrille to his control. Those who decided not to join were discharged from the U.S Air Service, but they continued to fly combat missions for the French Service Aeronautique as civilians. Of the ones who joined the 103rd Pursuit Squadron six of them became unit commanders and three became aces. Regardless of where the Americans served, the veterans of the La Fayette Escadrille continued the traditions of honourable service first begun in 1916.

Escadrille La Fayette Personnel including French Officers

(† indicates killed in action)

Name:	Joined N124	Victories	Departed N124
1) Capt. Georges Thenault	20 April 1916	1	6 January 1918
2) Lt. Alfred de Laage de Meux	20 April 1916	3	23 May 1917
3) Victor Emmanuel Chapman†	20 April 1916	-	23 June 1916
4) Norman Prince†	20 April 1916	3	12 October 1916
5) James Rogers McConnell†	20 April 1916	-	19 March 1917
6) Kiffin Yates Rockwell†	20 April 1916	3	23 September 1916
7) William Thaw	20 April 1916	2	18-February 1918
8) W Bert Hall	28 April 1916	3	1 November 1916
9) Elliott Christopher Cowdin II	28 April 1916	-	25 June 1916
10) Raoul Lufbery†	24 May 1916	16	5 January 1918
11) Horace Clyde Balsley	29 May 1916	-	18 June 1916
12) Charles Chouteau Johnson	29 May 1916	1	31 October 1917
13) Laurence Dana Rumsey, Jr.	4 June 1916	-	25 November 1916

Name:	Joined N124	Victories	Departed N124
14) Dudley Lawrence Hill	9 June 1916	-	18 February 1918
15) Didier Masson	19 June 1916	1	8 October 1917
16) Lt. Charles Nungesser	14 July 1916	1	15 August 1916
17) Paul Pavelka†	11 August 1916	-	24 January 1917
18) Robert Lockerbie Rockwell	17 September 1916	-	18 February 1918
19) Willis Bradley Haviland	22 October 1916	1	18 September 1917
20) Frederick Henry Prince, Jr.	22 October 1916	-	5 February 1917
21) Robert Soubiran	22 October 1916	1	18 February 1917
22) Ronald Wood Hoskier†	11 December 1916	-	23 April 1917
23) Edmond Clinton Genet†	19 January 1917	-	16 April 1917
24) Edwin C. "Ted" Parsons	25 January 1917	1	26 February 1918
25) Stephen Sohler Bigelow	8 February 1917	-	11 September 1917
26) Walter Lovell	26 February 1917	1	24 October 1917
27) Edward Foote Hinkle	1 March 1916	-	12 June 1917
28) Harold Buckley Willis	1 March 1917	-	18 August 1917
29) Kenneth Archibald Marr	29 March 1917	1	18 February 1918
30) William Edward Dugan, Jr.	30 March 1917	-	18 February 1918
31) Thomas Moses Hewitt, Jr.	30 March 1917	-	17 September 1917
32) Andrew Courtney Campbell, Jr.†	15 April 1917	-	1 October 1917
33) Ray Claflin Bridgman	1 May 1917	-	18 February 1918
34) Charles Heave Dolan	12 May 1917	-	18 February 1918
35) John Armstrong Drexel	12 May 1917	-	15 June 1917
36) James Norman Hall	12 May 1917	1	18 February 1918
37) Henry Sweet Jones	12 May 1917	1	18 February 1918
38) Lt. Arnoux de Maison-Rouge	28 May 1917	-	6 October 1917
39) Douglas MacMonagle †	16 June 1917	-	24 September 1917
40) David M. Peterson	16 June 1917	1	18 February 1918
41) James Ralph Doolittle†	2 July 1917	-	17 July 1917
42) Lt. Louis Verdier-Fauvety	6 October 1917	-	18 February 1918
43) Christopher William Ford	8 November 1917	-	18 February 1918

Major Raoul Lufbery by his Nieuport 28 in an American uniform, after his transfer to the US Air Service from La Fayette Escadrille.

While flying with the La Fayette, he was their highest scoring ace. Just three months later his Nieuport caught fire during a dogfight above the 94th US Squadron, at Maron. Lufbery, who had always sworn that he would never burn to death, tried to extinguish the flames by shutting off the engine and sideslipping, first to the left then to the right without much success. Horrified, onlookers on the ground saw him climbing out of the cockpit, crawling back along the fuselage towards the tail and letting go, falling three thousand feet to his death.



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Marnes-la-Couquette, 20 minutes west of Paris, just north of Versailles, France, is the location of Mémorial Escadrille La Fayette. In 1928, veteran aviators of the First World War gathered to dedicate a monument to the American volunteers who came to the aid of France between 1914 and 1918. The impressive monument is composed of a central Arch of Triumph, one-half the size of the Arch of Triumph in Paris. Upon the stone are inscribed the names of the dead American pilots of the Escadrille La Fayette and the Lafayette Flying Corps during the first World War. The names of the French towns and provinces are also inscribed where these pilots fought the Germans. The inscriptions are in French on one side and in English on the other side of the monument.

The monument also serves as the final resting place for the veteran American flyers. Members of the original Lafayette Escadrille and those of the Lafayette Corps lie in repose beneath the soaring marble arch in a dedicated crypt that has 68 sarcophagi, surrounded by stained glass windows depicting the aerial campaigns in which they proudly served.

The Memorial may be reached from Paris by train from the Gare St.Lazare (train station St.Lazare) to the station of Garches - Marnes-la-Coquette A walk of 500 yards brings the visitor to the entrance of the Parc de Villeneuve-l'Etang, just beyond the Institut Pasteur. By automobile, the route lies across the Seine, by the St-Cloud bridge and then direct to Garches and the Memorial. The Park is open every day, morning and afternoon.

For 2016, the ceremony was special. Three French Air Force (FAF) planes Mirage 2000Ns one with the special livery, one FAF Rafale along with four USAF F-22s, flew past in formation, as well as a B-52 Stratofortress bomber and Stearman PT-17 biplane performed flyovers commemorating the 100th anniversary of the La Fayette Escadrille's formation.



U.S. Air Force Photo



Four French air force Mirage 2000Ns fly over the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016



U.S. Air Force Photo



Four French air force Mirage 2000s fly over the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016



Four F-22s from the USAF fly over the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016





USAF B-52 flies over the La Fayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016



U.S. Air Force Photo by Tech. Sgt. Joshua DeMott



USAF B-52 flies over the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016



Throughout the ceremony there were a total of three flyovers in honor of the men of the La Fayette Escadrille. In addition to paying respects to the fallen pilots, these flyovers served as a demonstration of the evolution of airpower from WWI to modern day.

The squadrons of the US Air Force aircraft that participated in the flyovers can trace their lineage back to the La Fayette Escadrille.

The F-22 can trace its lineage back to the La Fayette Escadrille through the 94th Fighter Squadron, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., to the 103rd Aero Squadron, which was the successor to the La Fayette Escadrille when the Air Service, American Expeditionary Force, arrived in France in 1917.

The four F-22s that participated in the flyover were from the 325th Fighter Wing, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, while two of the participating pilots were from the 94th legacy squadron.

Several bomb squadrons can also trace their legacy back to WWI, including the 93rd Bomb Squadron whose lineage goes back to the 93rd Aero Squadron and the distinction of having taken part in 157 combat missions during WWI between the Lorraine, St. Mihiel, and Argonne-Meuse.

The B-52 that flew in representation of the 93rd Bomb Squadron during the memorial event was from the 5th Bomb Wing, Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota.

Also in attendance at the event were descendants of the La Fayette Escadrille pilots who came to pay their respects to their relatives and the legacy that they created 100 years ago.

AFP PHOTO / Elliott VERDIER



Stearman PT-17 biplane

The memorial celebrated not only the 38 original pilots of the La Fayette Escadrille, but all 269 American pilots who flew with the French Air Force as part of the larger Lafayette Flying Corps, 68 of whom were killed during the war and are interred at the memorial crypt.

Secretary of the Air Force, Deborah Lee James, remarked that, "We also honor all French and American citizens who have devoted their life to protecting our shared ideals. These valiant Airmen laid the foundation for an American Air Force that will forever stand with France."

During the ceremony, U.S. Ambassador to France, Jane Hartley, along with French Minister of State for Veterans and Remembrance, Mr. Jean-Marc Todeschini, addressed those gathered for the memorial event. Both Hartley and Todeschini emphasized the sacrifice that the men of the Lafayette Escadrille made 100 years ago to fight for their country's shared values and to defend their freedoms just as the men and women of the U.S. and French militaries continue to do today.

The ambassador acknowledged two individuals in particular that were in attendance at the event. "We salute the courage and sacrifice of all the Tuskegee Airmen, and especially the two here with us today, Mr. Eugene Richardson and Mr. Theodore Lumpkin," said Hartley.

The Tuskegee Airmen were in attendance in honor of the world's first black aviator, Eugen Bullard, (inset above) or as he was better known, the Black Swallow of Death, who flew with the Lafayette Flying Corps and ultimately earned France's highest military decoration, the Legion of Honor.



U.S. Air Force

U.S. Air Force Photo by Tech. Sgt. Joshua P. Motts





 French veterans bear the colors during the La Fayette Escadrille Memorial 100th anniversary ceremony in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016

U.S. Air Force Photo by Tech. Sgt. Joshua DeMottis



John Yellow Bird Steele, representing the Sioux Nation, offers a traditional Native American incantation during the La Fayette Escadrille Memorial 100th anniversary ceremony in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016



THE DEAD OF THE ESCADRILLE LA FAYETTE AND OF THE LA FAYETTE FLYING CORPS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR ENLISTMENT IN THE FRENCH ARMY

NAME	DATE OF ENLISTMENT	DATE OF DEATH	DECORATIONS
1914			
DOWD DENNIS	AUGUST 21	AUGUST 11 1916	
ROCKWELL ARTHUR JAMES	AUGUST 21	SEPTEMBER 13 1916	
TRINDARD CHARLES	AUGUST 21	NOVEMBER 23 1917	
LUFBERY GEORGE PAUL VICTOR	AUGUST 21	MAY 15 1918	
CHAPMAN VICTOR	SEPTEMBER 11	JUNE 25 1918	
SEANLAN LAWRENCE	NOVEMBER 26	NOVEMBER 23 1921	
PAVELKA PAUL JR	NOVEMBER 26	NOVEMBER 11 1917	



A B-52H from 93rd Bomb Squadron, 5th Bomb Wing, Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, does a low level flyby over Paris, France during the memorial event celebrating the 100th anniversary of the La Fayette Escadrille, April 20, 2016. This was a very rare event.



Three Mirage 2000Ns and one Rafale fly over the La Fayette
Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette, France, April 20, 2016,





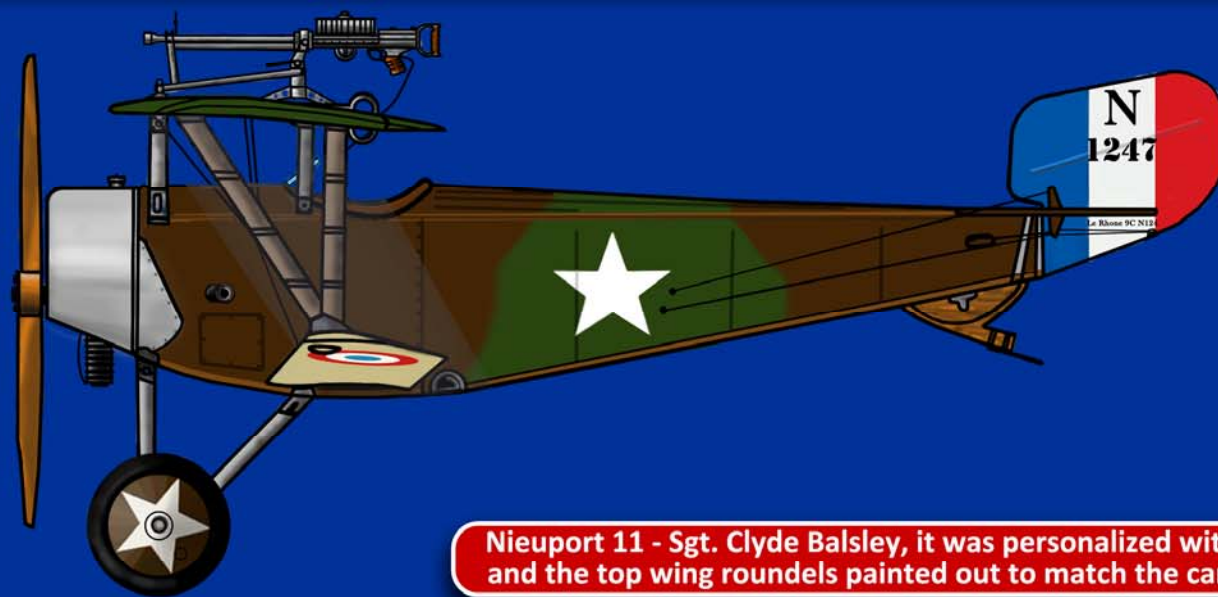
Aircraft of the La Fayette Escadrille during and after WWI

The airmen of La Fayette Escadrille flew the French-made Nieuport and SPAD biplanes during WWI. The Nieuport models included: 11, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 24bis, and SPAD models: VII and XIII. Initially the Nieuport 11 were used by the first wave of volunteers however, the SPAD VIIs became the main aircraft flown by the majority as the escadrille expanded. The paint and camouflage patterns were often personalized by the pilots, and most of the aircraft also featured either Seminole Indian or the more fierce looking Sioux warrior head on both sides of the fuselage.

The design of the Nieuport 11 was basically a smaller, neater version of the Nieuport 10. Like the "10" the "11" was a sesquiplane, a biplane with a full-sized top wing with two spars and a lower wing of much narrower chord and just one spar. It was called "Bébé" (Baby) because of its small size. The armament on the Nieuport 11 was a Lewis gun, mounted above the center section of the wing to fire above the propeller arc. The little Nieuport quickly became popular with Allied flyers for it had a good rate of climb and was very maneuverable. The powerplant was the 80 horsepower Le Rhone rotary engine, installed in a horse-shoe-shaped cowl.

French Escadrilles first received the Nieuport 11 during the summer of 1915, and it helped to win temporary air superiority for the Allies over the Fokker Monoplane flown by the Germans at that time. Toward the end of 1916, the Nieuport 11 began to be replaced by the higher-powered, better armed Nieuport 17 in response to the introduction by Germany of higher performance aircraft.

Photos of WWI airmen can be found at the archives of the San Diego Air and Space Museum as well as U.S Air Force's website without any copyrights.



Nieuport 11 - Sgt. Clyde Balsley, it was personalized with a white star and the top wing roundels painted out to match the camouflage.

Nieuport 17 - Gervais Raoul Lufbery
Note: The Seminole Indian head



SDASM Archives

Nieuport 17 - Robert Soubiran wearing a sidcot type flight suit



SDASM Archives

Nieuport 24bis-Sgt Andrew Courtney Campbell



SDASM Archives

Spad XIII C.1 - Capt. Robert Soubiran
US 103 Aero Squadron



After WWI

The history of the La Fayette Escadrille did not end when the squadron was incorporated into the American Air Service but continued after WWI. From 1920 to 1939, the French Ministère de l' Air (Air Ministry) assigned the title La Fayette Escadrille in recognition of the American flyers, and to carry on the tradition, among them:

- In 1920 7th Squadron of the 35th Aero Regiment, and its planes carried the Sioux head insignia.
- In 1933, the Sioux Squadron was joined with the other elite group, Cigognes (the Storks) to form the Groupe de Chasse 2/5, Escadrille La Fayette. This unit flew the Dewoitine 500, at various bases throughout France during the 1930's and was stationed at Toul-Croix-de-Metz when the Second World War broke out in September 1939.



Dewoitine D500 of GC 2/5



Curtiss H75-C1 (P-36 Hawk) of the La Fayette Escadrille

© Christopher Mifsud

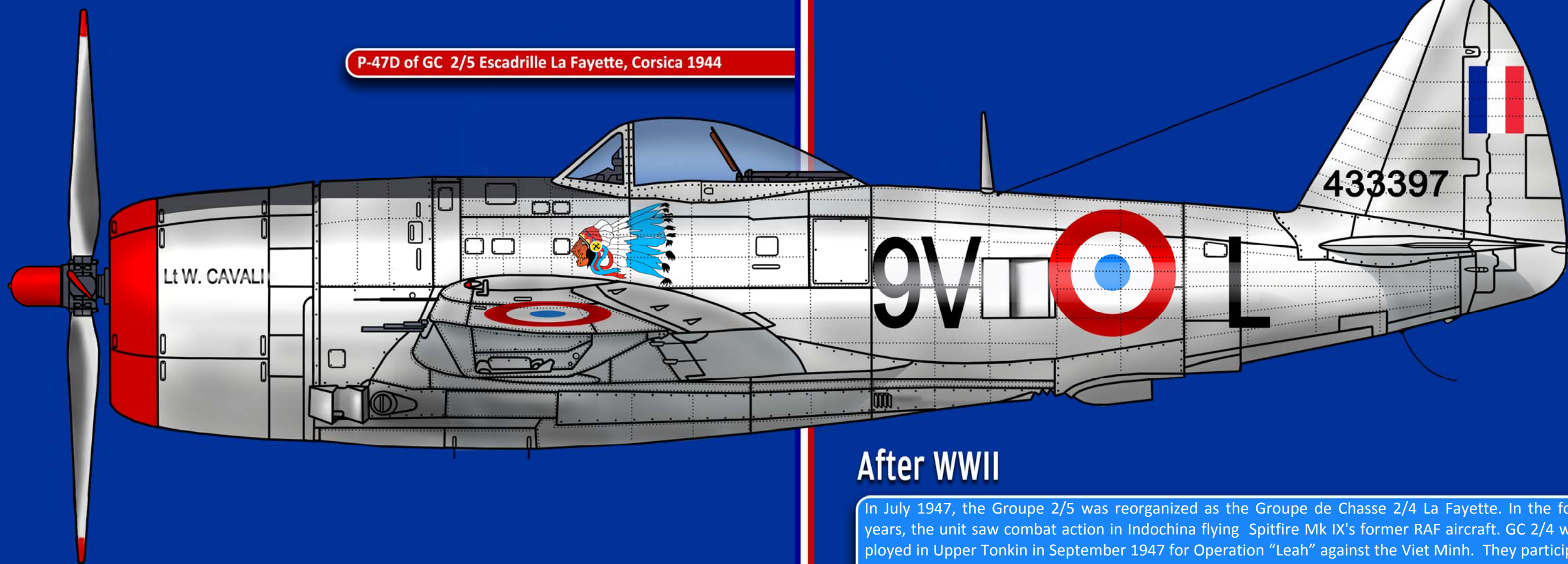
At the beginning of WWII, the La Fayette unit was re-formed in North Africa where it flew with the Free French Air Force. Initially outfitted with the Curtiss P-36 "Hawk" known in France as the Curtiss H75-C1 (the "Hawk" name was not used in France) they were soon upgraded with the superior P-40F "Warhawk" when 12 P-40Fs of the former USAAF were transferred to them. Over the course of WWII, the Groupe 2/5 flew in the North African, Italian, French and German theatres with several types of fighter aircraft.



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12 Curtiss P-40F Warhawk fighters in Casablanca, Morocco (former USAAF 33rd Fighter Group P-40s) handed over to the Groupe de Chasse GC II/5, La Fayette Escadrille, Armee de l'Air on 25 November 1942

P-47D of GC 2/5 Escadrille La Fayette, Corsica 1944



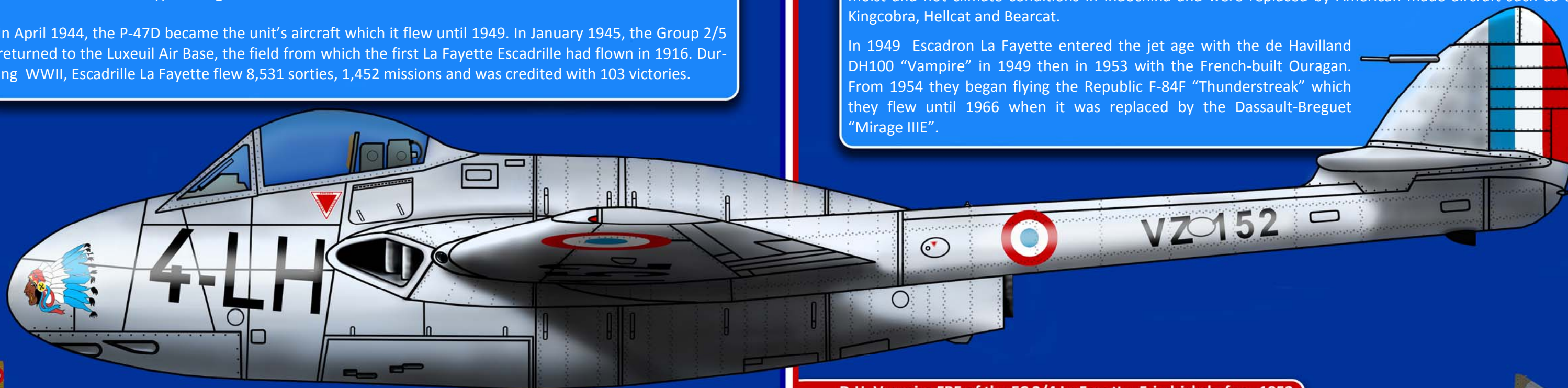
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In April 1944, the P-47D became the unit's aircraft which it flew until 1949. In January 1945, the Group 2/5 returned to the Luxeuil Air Base, the field from which the first La Fayette Escadrille had flown in 1916. During WWII, Escadrille La Fayette flew 8,531 sorties, 1,452 missions and was credited with 103 victories.

After WWII

In July 1947, the Groupe 2/5 was reorganized as the Groupe de Chasse 2/4 La Fayette. In the following years, the unit saw combat action in Indochina flying Spitfire Mk IX's former RAF aircraft. GC 2/4 were deployed in Upper Tonkin in September 1947 for Operation "Leah" against the Viet Minh. They participated in the "Terminus" operation in May 30, 1948, their Interventions continue north and south: Hanoi, Lang Son, Phong Nue, Red River, Nha Trang, Saigon, etc. The Spitfires didn't work well for the French Forces in the moist and hot climate conditions in Indochina and were replaced by American made aircraft such as the Kingcobra, Hellcat and Bearcat.

In 1949 Escadron La Fayette entered the jet age with the de Havilland DH100 "Vampire" in 1949 then in 1953 with the French-built Ouragan. From 1954 they began flying the Republic F-84F "Thunderstreak" which they flew until 1966 when it was replaced by the Dassault-Breguet "Mirage IIIE".



D.H. Vampire FB5 of the EC 2/4 La Fayette, Friedrichshafen , 1953



M.D. 450 Ouragan 2/4 La Fayette



F-84F Thunderstreak 2/4 La Fayette



Mirage III E 2/4 La Fayette, 1968

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After 1989 the Mirage 2000N of the 2/4 above, and the 95th Anniversary livery in 2011 below and top right

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In July 1989, the "Mirage 2000N," armed with ASMP-A nuclear cruise missiles, began service with the Groupe 2/4. The unit has been a part of the French Strategic Air Command and was designated as a Tactical Nuclear Strike Unit. Initially the La Fayette Group consisted of three Escadrille: Escadrille No. 124 Sioux, Escadrille SPA 167 Cigognes, "The Storks" (wings up) and Escadrille SPA160, les Diabls Rouge, "The Red Devils."

The La Fayette squadron was moved from Base aérienne 116 Luxeuil Saint-Sauveur to Istres, in September 2011 and merged with the Escadron de Chasse 2/4 Limosin, with 2/4 remaining the only Mirage 2000N operating squadron. Over the years, to commemorate anniversary milestones such as 50th, 75th, 95th and now the 100th anniversary several interesting paint schemes emerged. The 100th anniversary is especially striking when compared to the 95th's.



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Anniversary photo shoot formation:
(2) Mirage 2000Ns with a Rafale







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Patches of EC 2/4

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