

The Tuskegee Airmen

- African Americans were thought to lack the qualifications for skilled military training prior to 1940.
- Pressure from civil rights groups led the Army Air Corps to contract Tuskegee University in Alabama to create the first training program for African American pilots.
- Thirteen cadets entered the program in 1941, five graduated in 1942.

99th Fighter Squadron

- First all-black fighter squadron.
- Received little support from administration and battle-experienced pilots.
- Received Distinguished Unit Citation for their role in the Allied invasion of Sicily in 1943.

332nd Fighter Group

- Three more squadrons from Tuskegee combined with the 99th to form the 332nd Fighter Squadron. The group included pilots, navigators, and bombardiers.
- The Tuskegee Airmen were often requested as a fighter escort by bomber crews, although very few knew they were requesting African American pilots.
- Flight Squadrons were given the nickname "Redtails" by the allies who requested their escort due to the red paint on the aircraft's vertical stabilizer.

Distinguished Service

- Flew escort for heavy bombers, did not lose a single bomber in over 200 missions.
- Credited with over 700 military medals, decorations, and awards.
- March 29, 2007 President George W. Bush awarded 350 Tuskegee Airmen and their widows the Congressional Gold Medal.



First class of Tuskegee cadets; flight line at U.S. Army Air Corps basic and advanced flying school, Tuskegee, Alabama, 1941