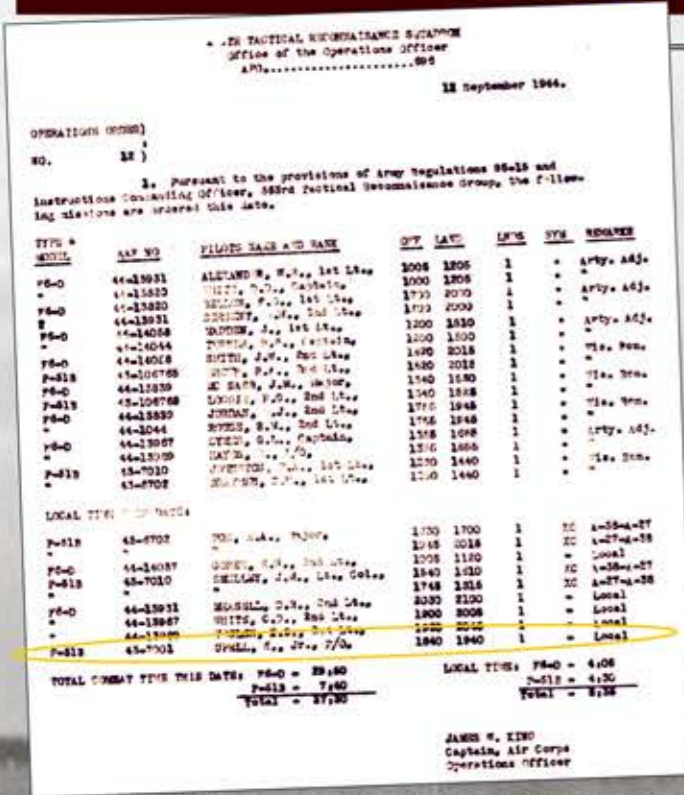


# CHANGE IN DESIGNATIONS

PROVING, ONCE AGAIN, THAT WHEN IT COMES TO MUSTANG HISTORY, NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS

BY ROBERT BOURLIER



This article has two photos of a Mustang and a back story that readers might find interesting. The airplane is P-51B-5-NA USAAF 43-7001 coded A9'D of the 160th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Group that was involved in a landing accident at Le Culot, Belgium,

on 5 December 1944. The titling on the negative added by the photographer indicates the plane is an F-6B, 43-7001. There are several items of interest concerning these photos. The first is the squadron. Initially the squadron was the 380th Fighter Squadron, 363rd Fighter Group. On 25 August 1944 the 363rd FG was redesignated the 363rd TRG and its three fighter squadrons, the 380th, 381st, and 382nd FS were redesignated the 160th, 161st, and

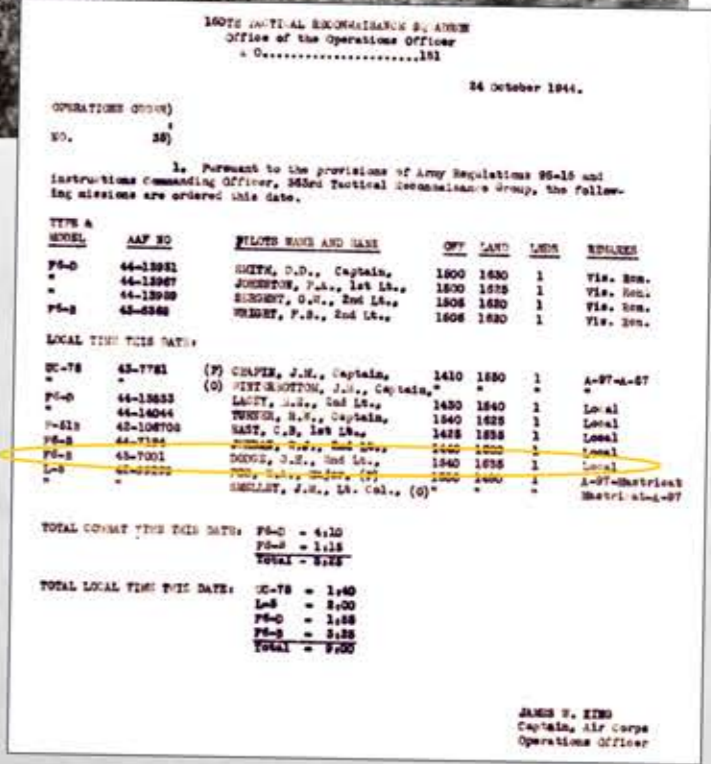
Document on 12 September 1944 showing USAAF 43-7001 listed as a "P-51B" that F/O E. Upell had taken on a one-hour local flight. Note that whomever typed the document incorrectly marked the F-6Ds as "F6-Ds."



USAAF personnel inspect 43-7001 and try to figure out the best way to get the plane out of the field. The extremely weathered condition of the Mustang is noteworthy.

162nd TRS. In making the transition, the fighter pilots were transferred to other fighter groups and replaced with trained tactical reconnaissance pilots. The squadrons received Tac-Recon F-6Ds while their P-51B/Cs were sent to BAD 2 Wharton (Base Air Depot 2 — where the USAAF could do maintenance, overhaul, repairs, or modifications to their aircraft) or the 463rd Service Squadron at Staplehurst, England, where they were modified with K-22 and K-24 cameras, camera controls, and Malcom Hoods (identified as bubble canopies in squadron records) then returned to the squadrons. One other point is of interest — there is a non-standard camera port just forward of the bar in the national insignia on the left side. I

have seen this on several Mustangs that went back to BAD 2 for modification. I have added a photograph of UK Tac-Recon modified 42-106772 that more clearly shows this interesting feature and would welcome comment from readers that might have further information, photographs, or tech orders.



In a document dated 24 October 1944, USAAF 43-7001 is listed as an "F6-B" flown on a one-hour local flight by Maj. E.A. Poe.

The photographer wrote on his negative "(GAD-4-167-12.5.44) (P51-F-6B-43-7001)" after he recorded this rather sorry view of the Mustang after it had come down in a very muddy field. The tops of the wings have a lot of overpainting — probably covering the D-Day identification stripes, and there is a large hole in the rear fuselage just under the antenna — either flak or fighter damage and perhaps the reason for the forced landing.