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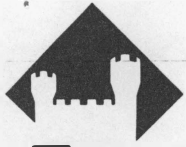
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For Immediate Release:

BLACK MILITARY PIONEER TO DISCUSS "TUSKEGEE AIRMEN" ON EIU CAMPUS

CHARLESTON -- In July 1941, as battles raged on throughout Europe and the Pacific, Army Air Forces initiated a program specifically designed to train black Americans as military pilots.

More than 1,300 aviator-hopefuls traveled to the Tuskegee (Ala.) Institute, a famed school of learning founded by Booker T. Washington 60 years earlier, to begin primary flight training conducted by the Division of Aeronautics. Four years later, by the end of World War II, 992 men had graduated from pilot training. Slightly less than half of those – 450 – were sent overseas for combat assignment, while others were trained at Tuskegee for aircrew and groundcrew duties – flight engineers, gunners, mechanics, armorers, etc..

Under the command of Col. Benjamin O. David, later to become the first black lieutenant general in the U.S. Air Force, the 450 pilots fought in the air over Sicily, North Africa and Europe. They flew more than 15,000 sorties, completed 1,578 missions and were called "Schwartzte Vogelmenshen (Black Birdmen)" by the Germans.

Members of the Charleston and other area communities are invited to come and listen as an early black aerial pioneer, Lt. Col. James C. Warren, discusses the founding of the original Tuskegee Airmen and the challenges and adventures they experienced. Admission to "Then and Now: Tuskegee Airmen," set to take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 21, in the University Ballroom on the campus of Eastern Illinois University, is free.

A reception and book signing will follow in the nearby 1895 Room. Warren is the author of "The Tuskegee Airmen Mutiny at Freeman Field."

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Eastern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

In addition, from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22, Warren will be joined by Lt. Col. Antoine Taylor for a "Before and After" discussion in Phipps Lecture Hall (Room 121), located in Eastern's Physical Sciences Building. Admission to this presentation also is free and open to the public.

Warren, a highly decorated serviceman who entered active duty in March 1943, entered aviation cadet training at Tuskegee Army Air Field, completed navigation training at Hondo, Texas, in August 1944, and bombardier training at Midland AAF, Texas, in February 1945. He served in World War II as a member of the 477th Bombardment Group (M), flying the B-25 Medium bomber, and was released from active duty a year later.

However, that was not to be the end of his military career.

In March 1952, in the midst of the Korean War, Warren was recalled into duty, flying 50 combat missions in the Douglass B-26 "Night Intruder." From 1953 to 1956, he was assigned to McChord Air Force Base, Washington, and flew on worldwide routes in C-124, C-54 and C-118 aircraft. He was subsequently assigned as the flight facility officer at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where, in addition to his flight facility duties, he served as the command navigator for the Commander United States Air Force Europe (ADVON).

In 1960, Warren returned to the continental United States and was assigned to the Military Air Transport Command at Travis Air Force Base, California, where he flew C-124. He was assigned to the first USAF all-jet transport squadron as a flight examiner navigator on the C-135B in March 1962, and completed pre-combat training for later assignment to the 360th Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron at Tan son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. He arrived in Vietnam in February 1967 and flew 123 combat missions in EC-47.

Warren returned to CONAS in 1968 and was assigned to Travis Air Force Base as a navigator on the C-141. He later became squadron commander of the 60th Service Squadron and 60th Air Base Group Headquarters Squadron and squadron chief navigator.

Warren retired from the United States Air Force on 1 November 1978.

"Then and Now: Tuskegee Airmen," co-sponsored by Eastern's Office of Minority Affairs, Human Resources and ROTC, takes place in conjunction with the university's African-American Heritage Celebration 2001.