

341 OPERATIONS SUPPORT SQUADRON



MISSION

The 341 Operations Support Squadron maximizes the operations group's combat readiness by training missile crews, missile alert facility managers and chefs. The 341 Operations Support Squadron provides emergency war order materials and missile launch codes for 20 MAFs and 200 ICBMs, manages ICBM crew schedules and maintains training documentation for more than 300 missileers. The squadron oversees wing battle staff training and operations and furnishes mission-critical intelligence support for the wing and its tenant units. Additionally, the 341 Operations Support Squadron provides weather services and information to the wing and DoD and civilian agencies throughout Montana.

LINEAGE

341 Airdrome Squadron constituted and activated, 1 May 1944

Inactivated on 15 Nov 1945

Disbanded on 8 Oct 1948

Reconstituted and redesignated 341 Operations Support Squadron, 29 Aug 1991

Activated, 1 Sep 1991

STATIONS

Statesboro AAFld, GA, 1 May 1944

Cross City AAFld, FL, 19 Aug 1944

Drew Field, FL, 6 Oct 1944

Camp Stoneman, CA, 31 Oct-6 Nov 1944

Leyte, Philippine Islands, 1 Dec 1944

Luzon, Philippine Islands, 31 Jan 1945

Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, 27 Jul 1945

Japan, Oct-15 Nov 1945

Malmstrom AFB, MT, 1 Sep 1991

ASSIGNMENTS

3 Air Commando Group, 1 May 1944-15 Nov 1945 (attached to III Tactical Air Division, 1 May-18 Aug 1944 and to 5 Liaison Group, Command [Provisional], 3 May-15 Nov 1945)

341 Operations Group, 1 Sep 1991

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Edward Mendones

Lt Col Justin Mulkey

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Leyte

Luzon

Global War on Terrorism (GWOT-S)

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Sep 1991-31 Aug 1993

1 Sep 1993-31 Aug 1994

1 Sep 1994-31 Aug 1995

1 Oct 1995-30 Sep 1996

1 Oct 2002-1 Oct 2003

1 Oct 2004-30 Sep 2006

1 Oct 2006-30 Sep 2008

1 Oct 2008-30 Sep 2009

1 Jan 2010-31 Dec 2011

1 Jan 2015-31 Dec 2015

1 Jan 2017-31 Dec 2017

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

EMBLEM



341 Operations Support Squadron emblem: From just dexter of the honor point, an or and sable eagle with elevated wings flies toward dexter through the Brittany azure estoile sky. The sky is scattered with six argent five-point stars which blanket the ultramarine azure and or globe. The globe, which occupies the base positions of the disc, depicts the continent of North America. The disc is bordered with or. A Brittany azure scroll is attached below the disc. The scroll which is blank is also bordered with or. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The eagle in flight represents the might and power of the United States Air Force and our strategic nuclear deterrent force. The earth and space depict the two mediums in which we train our personnel. Approved: 9 Dec 1993. Though not mentioned in the official significance, the text submitted for approval with the emblem stated that the stars represented the six original flights that comprised the original squadron. (Approved, 9 Dec 1993). Emblem designed by Capt Jon Yost.

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 341 Airdrome Squadron was activated 31 May 44 at Statesboro, Georgia and was commanded by Captain Bertram E. Solomon. On 13 Aug 44 the Unit moved to Cross City Army Air Field, Florida where more personnel were added. In September Capt. Floyd W. Fuller became commanding officer replacing Capt. Solomon.

The squadron was designed to service the three Liaison Squadrons, the 157th, 159th and the 160th all assigned to the 3rd Air Commando Group. On 20 Oct 44 all four squadrons moved to Drew Field, Tampa, Florida to await overseas orders.

There were 210 men and officers in the Unit including:

Capt. Floyd W. Fuller, Commanding
2nd Lt Kenneth U. Pearson, Adjutant
1st Lt Claude S. Lewis, Engineering
1st Lt James R. Cousert, Communications

1st Lt Edward Congdon, Ordnance
Capt Corydon B. Ireland, Medical
2nd Lt Clifford F. Burk, Supply-Transportation
1st Sgt James O. Lockhart

On 20 Oct 44 the Unit boarded a train for Camp Stoneman, CA where they would board the USS Gen. Hersey for the long sea voyage to the island of Leyte in the Philippines.

Because U.S. troops were engaged in battle with Japanese troops not far from the area where the Unit was scheduled to land, debarkation was delayed until late in the day. Capt. "Hurry Up" Smith of the USS Hersey fearing a Japanese air attack while at anchor, ordered everyone over the side so that he could depart before dark. (Landing On Leyte - William Gray).

Hostilities continued not too far inland and it was necessary to camp near Red Beach (North of Dulag) overnight. While on the beach overnight it rained and the tide came in and destroyed some supplies before morning.

While still camped nearby and sleeping in pub-tents a gasoline dump went up in flames two nights later. Everyone had to evacuate the area while bulldozers pushed the drums aside and covered others with sand.

On 6 Dec 44, under cover of darkness, a Japanese troop carrier dropped 300 parachute troops about three miles from camp in an attempt to retake San Pablo, Buri and Bayug air fields. The US searchlights illuminated the parachutists and anti-aircraft guns fired on the planes. The 11th Airborne Division in the area succeeded in the destruction of most of the Japanese force as they landed and finally killing all of them five days later. "Tokyo Rose" was heard on the radio, the day after the air drop, announcing that the objective was to wipe out the Air Commandos.

On 11 Dec 44, the 341 supply officer landed at Tacloban Airstrip on Leyte after securing a ride by C-47 from Hollandia, New Guinea, when he finally located the squadron some 20 miles south it was the first time he had seen the Unit since leaving Cross City, Florida some two months earlier, the bad news was that much of the equipment had been lost or damaged. The next day a generator was acquired from a supply depot to provide lights for the first time and then a 2 1/2 ton truck was acquired so that other much needed supplies could be brought back to the squadron area.

The Squadron left Leyte 18 Jan 45 by LST for Luzon Mangaldan on the Lingayen Gulf, arriving 31 Jan 45, just three weeks after US troops landed there on their drive to Manila.

Camp was set up near Calasiao south of Dagupan. Less than 100 miles north were 200,000 Japanese troops and to the south the battle for Manila was raging.

All necessary equipment, trucks and jeeps were received here and the Squadron was again able to serve the Liaison Squadrons as they were intended.

On 30 Apr 45 after Manila was secured the Unit moved south near Mabalacat, a little north of Clark Field where camp was set up in dry rice paddies.

THE LANDING ON LEYTE

by William C. Gray

One incident that never slipped my mind was the landing on the island of Leyte. What a SNAFU that was. Old Captain (Hurry Up) Smith ordered us off the USS General Hersey for fear of a Jap air raid. At that time we were calling old Smitty four letter words he was following proper procedure for the safety of all personnel and his ship. The Japs had the initial advantage in the battle of Leyte, but then decided to withdraw. It was lucky for us since the Japanese fleet could have clobbered us, had they continued with their battle plans.

The first night on the Island was a disaster since we lost all our equipment. We were bedded down on the beach, without a thought for the high tide, which came in during the night and wiped us out. I woke up with water up to my arm pits. Cliff Burk our supply officer came to our rescue and through begging, borrowing and stealing we were able to get some new supplies needed for creature comfort.

Later I went to Okinawa and then to Seoul, Korea after VJ Day. On leaving Korea I had Thanksgiving dinner aboard the USS Bayfield and enjoyed the following menu: Shrimp Cocktail, Roast Turkey, Giblet Gravy, Sage Dressing, Harvard Beets, Whipped Potatoes, Hot Rolls, Olives, Mince Pie, A La Mode, Mixed Nuts, Hard Candy, Bread, Butter and Coffee. It was a meal I shall never forget.

While on the Ryukrus island in August 1945, I wrote a letter to my Grandmother, excerpts are as follows: "As you can see by my new APO address, I am getting closer to our goal, Tokyo, Japan, no doubt all of you have heard the wonderful news of the atomic bomb as well as the news that Russia with her vast strength will join us to bring this terrible mess to an early end. To die by the bomb must be a horrible death but I thank God that the right people have control of such a weapon.'

On 25 July 45 the 3341 loaded on an LST bound for Okinawa by way of the South China Sea.

On 27 July 45 they landed just north of Naha on the west coast and within good view of Ie Shima where the rest of the 3rd Air Commando Group was located.

The war ended August 15. The Japanese peace party landed on Ie Shima where they boarded a US plane for their trip to Manila to arrange the final peace terms.

The 341 Airdrome Squadron as a unit disbanded on Okinawa in early September, 1945. Many of the men returned to the USA while others were sent, to Korea and still others were sent to

Chitose, Hokkaido where most of the 3rd Air Commando Group was stationed as occupation forces.

JAPANESE BOMBER - LUZON

by Cliff Burk 341 Airdrome Squadron

When we were on Luzon in 1945, I shared a bamboo framed and floored tent with Captain Floyd and Captain Ireland, our doctor. Behind the tent, our Filipino house boy had built a bamboo wash rack which included three openings where each of us could invert our steel helmets to use as wash bowls. Buckets were filled with water each night before the boy went home and one was left at each side of the wash rack.

One night after midnight after all had retired, we were awakened by the roar of an enemy airplane estimated to be about 5,000 feet in a very dark sky. Before long all of our guys were out of their tents in their under-shorts on the very warm night, for this was most unusual as even our own planes seldom flew at night.

Soon one of our anti-aircraft outfits, not more than a half mile away from us, started to fire into the sky which was quite lit up with tracers and their powerful search light, although we could not see an enemy plane.

During the ack ack display our guys were cheering like they were at a ball game. After a few minutes the firing stopped and the plane's engine noise became faint.

As we talked about this excitement a large roar approached and soon we could make out the outline of a large bomber at an altitude of about 1,000 feet, it passed directly over our hushed crowd and we could see the blue flames from the twin engines. In seconds we heard some small muffled explosions and then silence. The plane apparently gained altitude and left the area.

The next day we heard that the plane had dropped small bombs with proximity fuses which our guys dubbed "Daisy Cutters" for they were designed to explode a few feet off the ground. A few U.S. Marines were wounded at a nearby airfield. None of the 3rd Air Commandos in the 3rd and 4th Fighter Squadrons were hurt.

The morning after the bombing, I was quite surprised to find one of our canvas buckets empty, it caught a piece of shrapnel from a nearby ack ack gun and had a big gash at the bottom, we had been standing not more than 20 feet away in shorts and our steel helmets were in our wash racks and NOT on our heads. We were lucky!

Officers and enlisted men from the entire Group (except ten Supply officers) left by troop train on October 20 for Camp Stoneman, Pittsburgh, California.

Ten Supply officers representing each squadron in the Group flew by commercial airlines to San Francisco on October 23. They were housed at Fort Mason and checked daily on delivery of items on their Table of Equipment as shipments were delivered.

The men boarded the U.S.S. General M.L. Hersey at Pittsburg on November 7, 1944 and left San Francisco harbor for the Southwest Pacific.

All of the Supply officers boarded an Air Transport Command C-54 at Hamilton Field on December 3, 1944 for a flight to Hickam Field, Hawaii. This flight proceeded to Hollandia, New Guinea with refueling stops at Johnston Island, Tarawa Atoll, Guadalcanal, and Biak Island (New Guinea).

Meanwhile, the U.S.S. Hersey crossed the equator on November 20, anchored at Finschhafen, New Guinea on November 24, anchored at Hollandia, New Guinea on November 26, and finally received orders to proceed to Leyte, Philippines where it arrived on December 1, 1944.

Because U.S. troops were at that time engaged in battle with Japanese troops not far from the area where our Group was scheduled to land, debarkation was delayed until late in the day. Captain "Hurry Up" Smith of the U.S.S. Hersey feared a Jap air attack while at anchor. So he insisted everyone go over the side to permit his departure before dark.

Hostilities continued not too far inland and it was necessary to camp near Red Beach (North of Dulag) overnight.

The Squadron went to sleep on the beach under ponchos as it rained that night. And, to make matters worse, the tide came in and some supplies were lost before morning.

While still camped nearby and sleeping in pup tents a gasoline dump went up in flames two nights later. One of the men was using a small can of gas to heat his dinner ration when he dropped the lighted can which fell on gasoline that was spilled on the ground. It spread to nearby 55 gallon drums and everyone had to evacuate the area while bulldozers pushed the drums aside and pushed sand on others. This destroyed more supplies.

A few days later, camp was set up in a palm grove across the road from 6th Army headquarters. There one of our damaged field stoves was used to distill whiskey and make raisin jack as well as to boil water to launder clothes.

Much of the supplies and equipment carefully checked at Fort Mason were lost or damaged. So, the next day, a power unit was obtained at the Supply Depot in Tacloban. Many of our men stood in line outside our headquarters tent that night waiting to write letters home for we had electric lights for the first time in eleven days ashore.

Then, we "acquired" a 2¹/₂ ton truck. This permitted us to drive around the area where we found unattended supply dumps where we accumulated every day necessities. Heavy rains bogged down any real operation for a couple of weeks.

On July 25, 1945 the 341st and Liaison squadrons loaded on an LST bound for Okinawa by way of the South China Sea, landing on July 27 just north of Naha on the west coast where we could view the island of Ie Shima (where Ernie Pyle, the war correspondent was killed on April 18, 1945).

The war with Japan ended on August 15. And the Japanese peace party landed at Ie Shima where they boarded U.S. planes for their trip to Manila to arrange the final terms.

The 341 as a unit disbanded early in September, 1945 at Okinawa when some men boarded an LST bound for Seoul, Korea only to encounter a typhoon that seemed to toss them around endlessly. Included were men from Communications, Engineering and our Mess cooks. After arrival, they were stationed at Kimpo Airdrome.

More men boarded another LST at Okinawa a few days later bound for Yokohama. They also rode out the typhoon and lost a bow door as they were driven so far off course they sighted the China coast before finally reaching Yokohama on October 6. They were stationed at Showa Ma, about twenty five miles southwest of Tokyo.

The remainder of the 341 withstood the typhoon and winds of more than 125 miles per hour before leaving on September 10 for Ota-ru, Hokkaido the northernmost island of Japan. Upon arrival on September 12, they proceeded to the Japanese naval air field and were housed in the three story barracks at Chitose Air Base near Sapporo.

Because of heavy winter snows in this area, all facilities (post office, PX, theater, etc.) were all undercover and were reached by long enclosed halls. In January, 1946, there was ten feet of snow on the ground. By this time, it was necessary to take a Japanese train from Sapporo, cross the straits on a ferry, and proceed to Tokyo to await a transport ship to the U.S.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.