

578 AIR MATERIEL SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

578 Material Squadron
Redesignated 578 Air Materiel Squadron, 22 Jan 1945
Inactivated
Disbanded
Activated, 31 Jan 1946
Inactivated, 19 Nov 1947
Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

STATIONS

West Field, Tinian
Kharagpur, India
Fort Worth, TX, 1 Nov 1946-19 Nov 1947
March Field, CA, 31 Jan 1946
Davis Monthan Field, AZ, 9 May 1946

ASSIGNMENTS

25 Air Service Group
Second Air Force, 29 Mar 1946

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Melvin V. Engstrom

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The first of the month (Dec 1944) saw the transfer of four men, all with the identical MOS (345), to the Camp Angus Replacement Center near Calcutta. The following day, December 2, we welcomed back five enlisted men and two officers from a well earned rest at U.S. Army Rest Camp #7 Ranket, India. They gave a very glowing account of the scenic background for the Himalaya Mountains are world famous. On the 29th of the month, four enlisted men, including our First Sergeant, were sent to U.S. Army Rest Camp #10, at Madras, India. This is a popular winter resort for the British colony in India. Except for the transfer of two more men to Camp Angus, no further changes in personnel occurred.

This was the first Christmas that we have celebrated overseas. The outstanding Christmas Supper prepared by our mess personnel, served in the gaily decorated mess hall, compensated somewhat for the absence of our loved ones. We all said a silent prayer for a speedy victory and a quick return to Shangri-La. To attain that end, we pledged ourselves to continued and sustained effort in upholding our excellent record of materiel supply to the bombardment squadrons.

Our various supply sections have made some noteworthy achievements in upholding the Army Air Force watchword, "Keep 'Em Flying". For instance, the Air Corps Supply section still maintains its record of not allowing any combat planes to remain grounded from a mission for lack of essential parts. In view of the size and complexity of the Superfortress, plus the time and distance involved in requisitioning and maintaining adequate stockpiles, this is indeed an accomplishment. In ensuring a continuous flow of transportation in and around the base, our Ordnance section has earned the praise and heartfelt thanks of all Base units.

Our Class 13 Supply section has successfully met the critical equipment needs of hundreds of combat crew personnel, who could not accomplish their extremely high altitude missions without complete and airworthy clothing equipment. Many bombardment squadron plane commanders have expressed their personal gratitude at the speed with which indispensable items or equipment were obtained on short notice in order to successfully carry out vital missions.

The highlight of the month was a raid by a lone Japanese plane on Christmas Night. Anti-aircraft batteries on the base had their first taste of action against an enemy plane, sending ack-ack fire screaming skyward in a brilliant display of red and white tracers against the background of a full moon in a blue evening sky. The enemy plane crossed at right angles to the runway, releasing incendiaries and anti-personnel bombs on establishments and warehouses adjacent to the flight strip. Our Signal Supply Warehouse was hit but suffered minor damage. This was

the first time that personnel of the squadron have come in contact with the enemy, and squadron discipline was excellent. Immediately after the raid, the Commanding Officer had a brief talk to the squadron on air raid discipline.

In the field of sports, our volleyball team placed second in our base league, losing a tie for first place by one game. The squadron basketball court has been wired for night games, attracting many men from other base units because of this unique feature. Night basketball games are now a regular part of our sports program. Plans are being drawn up for participation in the Base indoor baseball league. Many men in the squadron have signified their desire to play this most popular sport.

The end of the month - the end of an action crammed year - saw the gala celebration of New Year's Eve with a Squadron Party. Toasts were drunk and resolutions hopefully offered by many members of the squadron. Some were said in jest, but many were given with an earnestness and sincerity that was heartily reflected in the hearts and minds of our men. For we renewed our pledges to sustained effort for an early victory and prayed that the coming year would find us at home in a world at peace.

(JANUARY 1945) The first of the New Year saw our Quartermaster Supply Officer, Lieutenant Robert Peterson, off on a well deserved leave of absence to Rest Camp #2, at Darjeeling. Three days later we witnessed the long awaited promotion to Captain of our Stock Control Officer, W. E. Dreve. It came in the first Special Order put out for the New Year by the newly formed Office of the Deputy Commander, Twentieth Air Force. On the 6th of the month, one of our men received an emergency furlough through the XX Bomber Command. It's importance lay in the fact that the men of the squadron realized that the personal problems of the average soldier were not being ignored, in spite of the problems of replacement and transportation that the Bomber Command faced in this "end of the line" Theater of Operations.

On the 3rd and 4th of the month, squadron members participated in a very successful Service Group musical revue, "All 'Zin Fun", featuring the top G.I. band in India, the Jive Bombers, who broadcast almost daily from the American Armed Forces Radio Station, VU2Zu, in Calcutta. A combination of skits, songs, and featured specialties made it the best G.I. show ever seen on this base, in the opinion of scores of enlisted men and officers who witnessed it.

There was some change and movement among the squadron officers. Our Commanding Officer, Major Lewis E. Schwarz, Jr. was transferred to the 142nd Station Hospital in Calcutta for a short period of treatment. During his absence Captain Wendell E. Dreve acted as Commanding Officer. Our Deputy Air Corps Supply Officer, Warrant Officer Jack Lewis, was transferred to Headquarters, Air Service Command in India. Later in the month, 2nd Lieutenant Jess Fisher was assigned to the squadron and was designated as Communication Equipment Officer.

On the 13th, a group of men from the squadron participated in an All-India track meet in Calcutta. A soldier from the Ammunition Company attached to our Service Group established a

new record for the high jump in India, with a leap of 6 feet, 5 inches. The same group of men participated in a track meet held in the neighboring town of Kharagpur on the 28th, and one of our men managed to place fourth in the mile run against very tough competition. The enlisted man who had won the high jump event at the Calcutta meet, a former West Coast track star, also walked away with the event at the Kharagpur meet.

In an effort to bring the squadron up to full strength, two men who had recently seen service at advanced bases in China, and one corporal direct from the States were assigned to us. The return of our First Sergeant and three other enlisted men from rest camp at Madras brought the squadron almost up to operating strength. Near the end of the month, two other men were fortunate in winning the drawing to fill the squadron rest camp quota for February and they left for a well earned vacation to the rest camp at Madras. They were accompanied by 1st Lieutenant John T. Wakefield. Our Quartermaster Supply Officer, Lieutenant Robert Peterson, returned on the 18th from the rest camp at Darjeeling. He confirmed the reports that the mountainous north country had undergone it's worst cold spell in fourteen years.

On the 22nd, our squadron, heretofore designated as the 578th Materiel Squadron, was redesignated by official order as the 578th Air Materiel Squadron, in line with the previous redesignation of our 25th Service Group as the 25th Air Service Group. This follows the Air Force policy of identifying it's service organizations more closely with its tactical groups, both as a morale factor and in order to more easily distinguish between Air Force and Ground Force service units.

Inspections by base and Bomber Command Air Inspectors during the month again attested to the high efficiency rating that this squadron has enjoyed since it's activation in July of 1944. Of special note were the superior ratings awarded to our large Air Corps Supply section, where there were "no irregularities or deficiencies noted". The vital tactical equipment and clothing continually supplied to the Bomb Squadrons by this section with high efficiency and dispatch has earned the thanks of tactical groups and plane commanders alike. The section still maintains its record of never allowing a plane which was alerted for a mission to be grounded for lack of spare parts. With a supply line 14,000 miles long, this is indeed a record to be proud of.

The recent stepping up of operations both in Europe and in the Pacific has led to a reappraisal and preparation of organizational equipment for possible movement. While no word has been received from the Bomber Command of any future move, it has been the policy of this organization to be thoroughly prepared for any eventuality. In line with this policy, which the squadron has followed since it was activated, plans set up and initiated almost since activation have been carried out and will continue to be carried out until official word is received to take final action. Whatever the order and whenever it may come, this squadron stands ready to carry it out with speed and dispatch.

FEB 1945 After long months of speculation, the 25th Air Service Group was finally given the go-ahead signal to get ready for shipment. Orders came down from higher Headquarters that we

were to take a thirty day stock level of all supplies with the exception of Quartermaster. We were told to pack this equipment and supplies but that we would also be responsible to maintain the flow of supplies to the Tactical Bombardment Group necessary to perform missions without any interruption.

A production line for the manufacture of a standard size box which could be used as bins at our next destination was started and the fun really began then as the fight for lumber, nails, paint, banding machines, stencils and other needed materials was on. The speed with which much of this has been accomplished has surprised everyone. All EM have and are still doing a grand job on this project. Even though packed, we are still supplying the needs of all activities of this base.

Early Sunday morning, 25 February 1945, the first phase left this base. Colonel Rogers A. Gardner, the Commanding Officer of the 25th Air Service Group was in charge of this shipment. Major Louis E. Schwarz, Jr., our Squadron Commander, Lt. B. Verellen, Lt. Alfred H. Walters and approximately one-half of our Squadron strength of enlisted men were members of the first phase shipment. Captain Wendel E. Dreve assumed Command of the Squadron during the absence of Maj. Schwarz. Everyone wanted to leave on the first phase, as the heat of India is again starting. It would have been nice in leaving at this time but unfortunately this could not be. All Materiel duties are being carried on by the remaining section of the Materiel Squadron.

Lt. Gerald J. Boyle, the Air Corps Supply Officer was promoted to the rank of Captain on the 10 February 1945. Lt. John T. Wakefield and four (4) enlisted men returned from rest camp at Madras during the month.

During the month of February our Squadron Strength has remained the same. One man was transferred to the 142nd General Hospital while three (3) were shipped to another Squadron. Four men were received to replace these losses. The month drew to a close with everyone working harder to complete the many tasks assigned to us.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit yearbook, *Ft Worth AAF, TX*, Army and Navy Publishing Company, Baton Rouge, LA, 1947.