

346th AIRDROME SQUADRON

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

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Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

**43RD BOMB GROUP
IN AUSTRALIA DURING WW2**

63rd Bomb Squadron
"The Sea Hawks"

64th Bomb Squadron

65th Bomb Squadron
"The Lucky Dicers"

403rd Bomb Squadron
"The Mareeba Butchers"

The 43rd Bomb Group arrived in Australia from Maine, USA in August 1942 equipped with B-17E Flying Fortresses. They spent several months at various bases, including Torrens Creek, Iron Range, Fenton and Mareeba.

The 43rd Bomb Group were at Iron Range with their B-17's as follows:-

Arrived	Departed
64th Squadron	12 Oct 42 abt 8 Nov 42
65th Squadron	13 Oct 42 7 Nov 42
403rd Squadron	15 Sep 42 22 Oct 42

The 43rd Bomb Group re-equipped with B-24 Liberators and moved to Dobodura in New Guinea in late 1943.

RAAF B-24 Liberator

Five Australian RAAF crews joined the 65th Squadron of the 43rd Bomb Group after some initial training in Charters Towers. On 3 December 1943, a decision was made that up to 25 RAAF aircrews would be attached to the USAAF's Fifth Air Force to gain experience with B-24 Liberators as the RAAF were due to receive this type of aircraft in the near future. Five Australian crews were attached to a USAAF unit at Charters Towers. One of the more notable flights they took part in during their training was a mustard gas bombing trial on Brook Island on 21 January 1944. The Captains of these RAAF crews were:-

Sqn. Ldr. John B. "Long John" Hampshire
Sqn Ldr. Jack O'Brien
Sqn. Ldr. Bill Rehfish
Sqn. Ldr. "Rusty" Rayson
Flt. Lt. Gordon "Mick" Jaques

The 43rd Bomb Group suffered many losses due to weather and mechanical problems.

1. B-17F Flying Fortress, #41-24550, ditched into Bootless Bay on 14 December 1942 after engine failure.
2. B-17E, #41-2461, "Tojo's Jinx" was destroyed in a training accident.
3. On 14 September 1942, B-17F, #41-24931, "Hoomalimali" of 63 Squadron caught fire at Mareeba and crashed.

4. "Spawn of Hell" got lost after bombing Rabaul and landed at Batumata Point. It was later salvaged. Later on in its career it was transferred to the 54th Troop Carrier Wing to become an armed transport aircraft.
5. 1st Lt. Freeman in #41-9194 crashed into a Port Moresby hillside.
6. 2nd Lt. Guyton Christopher ditched #41-24383 in the Gulf of Papua when he ran out of fuel after becoming lost.
7. B-17E, #41-9209, "Blues in the Night", of the 64th Squadron, hit a wallaby during a night take-off from 7 Mile airfield killing Ken McCullar. There were also reports that there may have been an engine fire prior to the impact with the wallaby. After this accident the 43rd Bomb Group called itself "Ken's Men" in honour of Ken McCullar.
8. 1st Lt. McArthur's aircraft was involved in a mid-air collision south west of Port Moresby. The whole crew were killed.
9. #41-9011 ditched off Duvira mission when it ran out of fuel. The crew were rescued by troops of the 41st Division.
10. B-17E, #41-9207, "Texas #6", crashed into the top of Hong Kong Mountain and amazingly there were four survivors. Unfortunately though, local natives led them to a Japanese patrol who executed them on the spot.
11. B-17E, #41-2481, "Topper" crashed on takeoff.
12. B-17F, #41-24552, "Listen Here Tojo" of the 65th Squadron, went missing in cloud after a bombing mission to Lae. The wreck was eventually found in 1992 at 8,900 feet on a mountain 13 miles south west of Lae.
13. B-24D Liberator, #42-40814, of the 64th Squadron of the 43rd Bomb Group, disappeared on a flight from Port Moresby to Brisbane on 19 July 1944.
14. B-24J Liberator, #41-47483 of the 403rd Bomb Squadron crashed on a small hill near Leichhardt Creek north of Bluewater Creek (north of Townsville) on 28 March 1944. The aircraft became lost during bad weather associated with a cyclone on a flight from Dobodura in New Guinea to Garbutt airfield.

Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources