

45 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, MEDIUM



MISSION

LINEAGE

45 Bombardment Squadron (Medium) constituted, 22 Nov 1940
Activated, 1 Apr 1941
Redesignated 45 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 7 May 1942
Redesignated 45 Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, 20 Nov 1943
Inactivated, 1 Oct 1946
Redesignated 45 Bombardment Squadron, Medium, 9 May 1952
Activated, 28 May 1952

STATIONS

Borinquen Field, PR, 1 Apr 1941
France Field, CZ, 17 Jun 1942
David, Panama, 13 Nov 1942
Galapagos Islands, 18 Feb 1943
Howard Field, CZ, 22 May-15 Jun 1943
Pratt AAFld, KS, 1 Jul 1943-11 Mar 1944
Chakulia, India, 9 Apr 1944-Apr 1945
West Field, Tinian, Apr-7 Nov 1945
March Field, CA, 27 Nov 1945
Davis-Monthan Field, AZ, 13 May-1 Oct 1946
Smoky Hill AFB, KS, 28 May 1952
Forbes AFB, KS, 20 Jun 1960

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Lakenheath, England, 9 Jun 1955-9 Sep 1955

ASSIGNMENTS

40 Bombardment Group, 1 Apr 1941-1 Oct 1946

40 Bombardment Wing, 28 May 199

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-18, 1941-1942

LB-30, 1942-1943

B-24, 1943

B-17, 1943-1944

B-26, 1943

YB-29, 1943-1944

B-29, 1943-1946

B-29, 1953-1954

B-47, 1954

COMMANDERS

Maj Giannatti

Maj Roger Hempleman

Maj Grimm

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater

India-Burma

Air Offensive, Japan

China Defensive

Western Pacific

Central Burma

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Yawata, Japan, 20 Aug 1944

Japan, 5-14 May 1945

Japan, 24 Jul 1945

EMBLEM



On and over a red demolition bomb outlined in black and marked with three yellow stripes, a yellow hawk with black head, in flight, and grasping a black forty-five caliber automatic pistol, outlined in yellow. (Approved, 6 Mar 1942)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Antisubmarine patrols, Dec 1941-May 1943. Combat in CBI, 5 Jun 1944-29 Mar 1945, and Western Pacific, 5 May-14 Aug 1945.

The 45 Bombardment Squadron was activated April 1, 1941, at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico. The five officers and 146 men were commanded by Major Giannatti.

From the day of its inception until the outbreak of War the 45 performed the usual garrison duties, also making many long distance flights over water. Some of these flights were made from Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico to Bases located within the continental United States, a distance of at least 900 miles. Others were made to U.S. bases located in the lesser Antilles and the northeastern coast of South America. Occasional flights were also made to Central America and the Netherlands' West Indies. All of these flights were performed in a routine manner and without incident. The squadron was equipped with B-18 at that time.

At the outbreak of WW II the squadron was placed on a continuous 24-hour alert status. From the day war was declared until the squadron moved to David, Republic of Panama on November 18, 1942, it carried out anti-submarine patrols over the Caribbean with B-18. After the squadron moved, it was equipped with LB-30 and B-24 aircraft and carried out long over-water patrols in the Pacific.

On May 22, 1943, the squadron prepared for its first contact with the state of Kansas. The move to Pratt Army Air Field, Kansas was completed by July 1, 1943.

While at Pratt, the 45 became the first bomb squadron to receive the brand new B-29 bomber. They claimed the first one off the assembly line on August 1, 1943. All personnel were fully trained in the new bomber by February, 1944.

In March, 1944, the 45 was alerted for movement overseas. By that time, the squadron had its full complement of nine B-29B. Manning consisted of 85 officers and 85 enlisted men.

All airplanes and men were in place in Chakulia, India, by April 18, 1944. The 45 was the first squadron in the 40th Bombardment Group to have all its airplanes in place.

On May 3, 1944, the squadron sent its first plane across the "Hump" into China to the advanced base of the 40th Bombardment Group. Flying the "Hump" was a real experience after hearing so many tales of the most hazardous stretch of flying in the world. The course flown took the planes from Chakulia to Jorhat, India; to Shingbaiyang, India; to Likiang, China; to Hsichang, China; and then direct to Haingching, China, the advanced base.

On May 5, 1944, the 45 Bombardment Squadron absorbed the 3d Bombardment Maintenance Squadron to form a unit totaling 174 officers and 370 enlisted men and crews into one unit. The merger joined flight line maintenance personnel and flight crews into one unit.

June, 1944, was the debut of the 45 in combat. After a shakedown mission over the railroad yards in Bangkok, Thailand, the squadron flew the first ever daylight B-29 bombing raid over Japan. The only other time Japan proper had been bombed was General Doolittle's B-25 raid in 1942.

Combat operations during the month of August, 1944, produced proof to the enemy that the B-29 was a definite global threat. All available aircraft were divided into two substantial forces. Staging from China Bay Airfield in Ceylon, the 45 struck by night at the Pladjoe Oil Refinery located at Palembang, Sumatra. Another force staged from forward area fields in China to strike at urban areas of Nagasaki, Japan the same night. Raiding targets 4,000 miles apart simultaneously forced the enemy to face a defensive nightmare of spreading their ground and air defenses over wide areas, not knowing from which direction the next blow would fall. The mission to Palembang was commended by General Henry H. (Hap) Arnold as the longest bombing mission in the annals of the United States Army Air Force.

Amidst the yearly monsoon season, in September, 1944, the 40th Bombardment Group began to initiate future plans set down by the new Commanding General of the XX Bomber Command, Major General Curtis E. LeMay. Under his command they laid plans for a 12-plane formation to increase fire power and to improve the bombing pattern. A greatly increased training program was inaugurated at Chakulia, but bombing missions continued despite the training.

Two daylight raids were directed at Japanese steel-making capability in September, 1944. This time, the target was Anshan in Japan occupied Manchuria. September was marked by yet

another first when the Japanese struck back at the forward staging base in China. Minor damage was done in the air raid.

Also in September, the 45 bombed the Okayama Aircraft Plant destroying 80 percent of the structures in the complex. The loss of Okayama greatly limited Japan's ability to stage and maintain aircraft involved in the battle of the Philippine Islands.

Perhaps the squadron's most outstanding contribution to the war effort during October, 1944, was their support of General MacArthur's invasion of the Philippines. The 45 pounded the island of Formosa on the 14th and 17th of the month. On October 20, 1944, General MacArthur landed.

At the end of 1944 the 45 had seen seven months of combat operations and had participated in twenty-two missions, directed against twelve primary targets. During these hectic and trying seven months the 40th Bomb Group lost several B-29s. This loss of personnel and aircraft was felt deeply by all men of the 45.

Many things happened during February, 1945. General Ramey visited the Group for an inspection and to award well deserved medals to ground and flying personnel, ranging from the Silver Star to the Purple Heart. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of the Southeast Asian Theatre Command, visited Chakulia and was pleased to be the first Theatre Commander to be given operational control of the B-29s. In addition to several photo sorties during February, the 45 claimed credit for sinking the floating Dry Dock at Singapore and a transport which was being repaired in the dock. This dry dock, the largest in the world, was Japan's main source of repair for their larger naval vessels.

April 1945 brought about the long awaited move from Chakulia, India, to Tinian Island in the Marianas. So far as the change of station was concerned, this movement was unprecedented in that it called for a flight of 3,960 statute miles, including several hundred miles over enemy territory and enemy controlled waters. Now at Tinian and under the XXI Bomber Command, operating procedures changed. The good old days were gone forever. In India the squadron had sometimes a week to ten days to prepare for a mission, now changes in dates and targets could be expected up to a few hours before takeoff.

It was on 7 August that the most powerful and destructive weapon in world history was introduced. This new weapon was the world shattering atomic bomb dropped from a B-29 aircraft. Hiroshima was the first target on which this new bomb was used. Immediately after this single bomb was dropped President Harry S. Truman announced to the world the unbelievable power of this weapon that would stagger the imagination. Tokyo reported that no life remained in Hiroshima owing to the destructiveness of the atomic weapon. The exact damage resulting from the terrific explosion was not revealed; some reports indicated that over four square miles of Hiroshima was literally evaporated and over 70% of the cities population killed. This one bomb was equivalent to the damage wrought by hundreds of B-29 raids with average bombs. So serious was this new weapon that the Japanese called a special cabinet

session as a result of the one bomb dropped on Hiroshima. At the same time the cabinet meeting was in session, Russia announced the long awaited news of her declaration of war on Japan. The world buzzed with speculation as to Japan's probable surrender with these two new and important factors being introduced. On 9 August another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki with even more devastating results than were caused by the first bomb dropped at Hiroshima. Reports indicated the second bomb to be an improvement over the first So great was the explosion from the atomic bomb that it was reported to be necessary to use a parachute in dropping the weapon, enabling the aircraft to outdistance the first terrific explosion area. The first experience at Hiroshima indicated that the B-29 which had dropped the bomb felt the explosion 10 miles away. It was described as being similar to an antiaircraft shell burst within 50 feet.

While aircraft on the 45 were returning from a mission over Japan word came from Radio Tokyo announcing Japan 's acceptance of the Potsdam Ultimatum: V-J Day, September 2, was an outstanding event for men of the 45. The 40th Bomb Group contributed 36 aircraft to the V-J Day celebration. Assembling over Japan, the aircraft, together with B-29s from all over the Marianas, put on a magnificent power display during the signing of the official surrender terms on the Battleship Missouri. It was a long tiresome flight, but all agreed that it was Well Worth the trouble.

The end of the War found the 45 Bomb Squadron two-thirds of the way around the world from the place where it had started and the records of its accomplishments were outstanding. The now weary but jubilant 40th Bomb Group had participated in 70 combat missions and had dropped a total of 9,218 tons of bombs on enemy targets. Its claims numbered 46 1/2 enemy planes destroyed, 92 probably destroyed, and 64 damaged. The cost had been 32 B-29s lost in combat, 53 men killed, 26 wounded and 134 missions.

The next several months following the war's end were spent rotating men and machines back to bases in the United States. by July, 1946, the 45 Bomb Squadron was in full operation at Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona. Their mission, vital to the post-war Air Force, was training and molding a highly efficient heavy bombardment group for operation anywhere in the world.

September, 1946, saw the end of the 45 Bomb Squadron until after the Korean War. Official inactivation occurred on October 1, 1946. The 45 Bombardment Squadron concluded a proud and might era in its history.

It was not until 20 January 1953, that reorganization of the 40th Bomb Wing as a B-29 unit was effected. Just prior to this date Fifteenth Air Force directed the establishment of the 40th Tactical and Maintenance Squadron (Provisional) at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The purpose of this unit was to receive and hold personnel, material, and aircraft surplus to the 303d Wing, then undergoing conversion to B-47s. The Provisional Squadron, organized 24 January 1953, was to eventually serve as the operational nucleus of the 40TH Bomb Wing, their temporary function being the retention, operation, and maintenance of aircraft until such time as Smoky

Hill AFB was prepared to accept the unit.

The 45 was activated October, 1953, under the command of Major Henry C. Smith. The last of the three squadrons to be manned, the 45 was initially equipped with five B-29 aircraft and flew its first mission on October 16, 1953.

In November, 1953, the 40th received plans for conversion to a new advanced jet bomber, the B-47. In May 1954 air crews began training in the new aircraft at McConnell AFB, Kansas

In August, 1954, LtCol Richard D. Stepp assumed command of the squadron, and in the same month, the first B-47 arrived on Smoky Hill AFB. By the end of the month the 45 had one aircraft. Many of the maintenance personnel had arrived but a few days before the first aircraft.

In December, 1954, the 45 became the proud owner of the 1,000th Wichita built Boeing B-47 off the assembly line. The aircraft, tail number 52-609, was named "The City of Salina." Ceremonies included introduction of the aircraft commander, Capt Paul R. Houser. Receipt of the airplane brought the 45 up to its full complement of 15 aircraft.

By February, 1955, the 45 was emerging as the top-notch military organization it had always been and would continue to be. That month the 45 claimed Ground Crew of the Month honors. The winning crew of aircraft 52-563 were A/1C Cornelius H. Blackledge, Crew Chief; A/2C Jesse D. Bowley and Leon E. Tomasky assistants. In addition, A/2C John C. Stevens was named Airman of the Month. To make it a clean sweep, the 45 we commended for being the best in the wing in three different bombing operations conducted during month.

The summer of 1955 was an eventful time for the squadron. In June, the 45 departed for 90 days temporary duty (TDY) to Lakenheath, England. The aircraft departed in three waves on June 3, 4, and 5. All launched on time and were in place in England by June 8, 1955. LtCol William G. Ivey took the squadron to England as its commander.

On September 7, 1955, Aircraft began departing Lakenheath for the return to Smoky Hill. By September 10th, all aircraft and personnel were back home in sunny Salina.

During 1956, the 45 continued to fly missions and Win awards. In the meantime, the most exciting event on Smoky Hill was the assignment of Col James W. (Whip) Wilson as 802nd Air Division Commander.

The year 1957 was an eventful one when, among other things, the squadron departed on its second TDY to England.

In December, 1957, Major Alfred R. Grimm became 45 Bomb Squadron Commander, Maj Grimm was a favorite, because he had moved up in the squadron after serving as an aircraft commander.

In May, 1958, the 45 began supporting operation "Reflex." This was a new alert concept in which fully loaded and armed B-47 aircraft were being kept on alert at overseas bases on a rotational basis. The first Reflex base was Greenham Common, England.

December, 1958, saw the end of direct identification of maintenance personnel with the 45 Bomb Squadron. As part of the wing reorganization an organizational maintenance squadron (OMS) was formed by combining maintenance personnel from the three bomb squadrons and the periodic maintenance squadron.

Planning for the move continued thorough 1959. The 45 was still commanded by Maj Grimm.

By July 1960, the 40th had completed the move to Forbes AFB. The 45 was now commanded by Maj Joseph F. Richter, the 40th OMS by Maj Patrick Bowman, and the wing by Col Normal J. McGowan. Many veterans of the 45 Bomb Squadron had been left behind and reassigned to the 310th Bomb Wing at Schilling AFB.

The 45 continued to operate out of Forbes AFB until 1964. Primarily, the squadron's efforts were in support of ground alert, Reflex alert, and a busy flying training schedule.

The 45 Bomb Squadron as well as the entire 40th Bomb Wing became inactive on September 1, 1964.

USAF UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.