

6 RADAR CALIBRATION SQUADRON

MISSION

6th Radar Calibration Detachment the mission was to furnish information to the proper authorities as to the exact coverage capabilities of a ground radar unit, and the reasons for its limitations if any.

LINEAGE

6 Radar Calibration Unit
6 Radar Calibration Flight
6 Radar Calibration Squadron

STATIONS

Attu (Casco Cove), AK
Elmendorf AFB, AK

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-64A
B-24D
SB-17G
YL-20
C-47D

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 6th Radar Calibration Detachment activated at Mitchel Field, New York, on August 20, 1943. It was authorized strength of just 35 men. The unit moved to Fort Dix, New Jersey, on September 28, 1943, and began training after reaching full strength on December 20, 1943.

At each radar site, detachment personnel inspected the equipment and then performed a series of calibration flights. Wood wrote that on average, it took about 18 flights and 30 hours of flight time to complete each assessment.

On February 22, 1944, the 6th Radar Calibration Detachment departed from Fort Dix by train, arriving around February 25 at Fort Lawton, Washington. On March 6, 1944, the unit shipped out from the Seattle Port of Embarkation. That same month, the detachment was assigned to the Eleventh Air Force. On March 25, 1944, the unit arrived at Attu in Alaska's Aleutian Islands.

The unit faced significant challenges upon arrival in Alaska. Although the detachment trained on Consolidated B-24 Liberators and was supposed to have a pair of them (one for each flight), initially the only aircraft available was a single war-weary North American B-25 Mitchell (serial number 41-29753) loaned by the 77th Bombardment Squadron (Medium).

Wood wrote that "It is very difficult to obtain the desired results with a B-25 type airplane." Only one pilot in the detachment was qualified on B-25s, requiring hasty transition training. The B-25's lower ceiling and shorter range also hampered the detachment. Eventually, the detachment had a fuel tank installed in the bomb bay as an improvised method of increasing their B-25's range.

The weather and remoteness of the radar stations also caused difficulties. Wood noted in his report that although calibration was supposed to be done during clear weather so the aircraft could be sure of its position relative to the radar station, in the Aleutians the weather was almost always cloudy. The unit found that they could still do their work by relying on radio navigation.

In April 1944 the detachment calibrated radar stations at Chichangof Harbor, on the east end of Attu, and on Shemya Island. The next station, Kresta Point, on the northwest side of Attu, was so remote that it took two weeks to find a way to get the ground team there by boat. It took another two weeks after that before the weather improved enough to fly there. The work was finally completed during May 24–29, 1944.

The unit calibrated Nevidiskov, on the south side of Attu, during June 21–28, 1944. Horrendous weather hampered work at Amchitka, in the Rat Islands group, from July 22, 1944, to August 12, 1944. Some good news arrived that month when the unit finally received one of its allotted B-24s, although the old B-25 stayed in service pending the arrival of a second Liberator.



6 Radar Calibration Detachment Commanding officer, Captain Gerald O. Taylor, standing in front of the 6th Radar Calibration Detachment's B-25

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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