

348th AIRDROME SQUADRON

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

COMBAT CARGO BACKGROUND

When General Joseph Stilwell was ready to begin the retaking of Burma, his forces were to fight across the northern Burmese mountains to the village of Naga. From there they would head down the Hukawng Valley toward the Japanese stronghold at Mogaung, then they would head to Myitkyina. At the same time Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, would attack Burma from China's western mountainous border. British General Orde Wingate and his "Chindits" were ready to begin their push into Burma with a goal of establishing permanent areas of occupation behind Japanese lines. British General William Slim was to bring his troops from Arakan, India into Burma. The final objective of this three pronged attack was the town Myitkyina. All these operations were to be largely supplied by air-support. These forces were initially supplied

by the 1st Air Commando Group, along with the 443d Troop Carrier Group and the 177th wing of the Royal Air Force.

The Japanese were also preparing two offensives, one westward into India's Imphal Plain and the other eastward into China. With the allies were poised to attack in three directions, logistics and supply became the number one priority. Air-supply units such as the ATC and CNAC where stretched to their limits. Troop carrier units and Air Commando units in Theater were war-weary after their defeat in Burma. Theater Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten, remembering a past promise from President Roosevelt, for air support, now asked for it.

To realize the total recapture of Burma, roads would have to be built from the railheads in the Upper Assam Valley, India into central Burma. Supplying this operation and other future operations, resulted in the creation of a new type of air-supply group, whose only purpose was to be air-resupply and supply ground units in a combat zone. The new groups original specifications were to: (1) "carry ground troops and auxiliary combat equipment to effective locations in a combat zone", (2) "maintain combat reinforcements, supply and resupply units in the combat zone", and (3) "evacuate casualties and other personnel from such zones." To this end a maximum of four (4) new cargo groups were planned. Seeing that these new units were to be carrying cargo into the heart of the battle, the new units were called Combat Cargo Groups.

The Combat Cargo Groups were to be self-contained groups, capable of being 100% operational and always ready to go at a moments notice. To that end, each Combat Cargo Squadron was to have an Airdrome Squadron assigned with it. Each Airdrome Squadrons mission was to supply all tasks, including everything (from cooking to aircraft maintenance), necessary for the Combat Cargo Squadron to be self-sufficient. Both of these groups would function as one unit. Each of the Combat Cargo Groups was to consist of four Squadrons, each with 25 aircraft (originally C-47's). To fly these aircraft, 25 compete crews were assigned along with 25 extra Flying Officers.

The 1st and 2nd Combat Cargo Groups were officially authorized in April 1944, and a four month training period began in May 1944. The 1st Combat Cargo Group (1st, 2nd, 3d, and 4th Combat Cargo Squadrons) was to be sent to the CBI theater on or about August 1944. While the 2nd Combat Cargo Group (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Squadrons) would be sent into the Pacific to support the scattered fighting there. Men and material were assembled and the 1st and 2nd Combat Cargo Groups began their training.

Airdrome Squadrons were assigned to the Combat Cargo Group in the states. The 1st Combat Cargo Group as assigned the 344th, 345th, 346th, and 347th Airdrome Squadrons. The 2nd Combat Cargo Group was assigned the 336th, 337th, 338th, and 339th Airdrome Squadrons.

By late 1943 General Stilwell had now begun his campaign in northern Burma, while General Wingate had pushed deep into Burma and was setting up bases behind enemy lines. The Japanese too began their campaign to capture the city of Imphal and the occupation of India. Their success depended upon the capture of Imphal. The Japanese managed to capture communication points around Imphal and laid siege to the city and the whole Imphal Plain. They also surrounded General Slims army, thus preventing the third prong of the Allied

offensive from beginning. If Imphal fell, the door to India was wide open for Japanese occupation. Since no existing air supply groups were available anywhere in any Theater to help relieve the siege at Imphal, it was decided to create the 3d Combat Cargo Group (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Combat Cargo Squadrons). This group would skip the training then being given to the 1st and 2nd Combat Cargo Groups. They would be deployed immediately and would return to the United States after the situation in Imphal was ended. The group never returned to the United States for that training. They remained in Asia until they were inactivated in 1946. At the same time, the 4th Combat Cargo Group (13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Combat Cargo Squadrons) was ordered into training.

The 3d Combat Cargo Group was assigned the 329th, 330th, 331st and 332nd Airdrome Squadrons. These four Airdrome Squadrons would not depart for the CBI with the 3d Group; they first would undergo training. The 4th Combat Cargo Group was assigned the 348th, 349th, 350th and 351st Airdrome Squadrons respectively.

It was obvious the new group would see action as soon as it arrived in theater. Supplies, parts and equipment were immediately shipped to the CBI (China-Burma-India Theater). Orders were issued on May 8, 1944 directing personnel to report to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida to form this new group under the code name of 'Bond Project' (Project 90752). The official indication was that this was to be a short overseas tour involving cargo operations. All men were initially assigned TDY, to the Air Transport Command (ATC).

One hundred new C-47A aircraft were delivered to Morrison Field along with 100 experienced multi-engine rated pilots, 100 experienced multi-engine rated copilots, one whom was my Dad, 2nd Lt. William J. Bielauskas, and with 75 additional Flying Officers as a reserve. Each aircraft was assigned a crew chief and radio operator, plus a navigator who was on loan from the ATC. When the Aircraft finished their overwater flights these navigators would return to the USA. Crews were assembled and shakedown flights began. To aid the aircraft during their long flight to India a large 500 gallon fuel tank was installed in the fuselage. Briefings were given to the crews and passengers, including survival training, and lectures on disease control. The lectures included among other things, malaria and venereal disease. Orders were issued on May 19, 1944 creating the aircraft flights that would fly together to India.

The new group flew via the South Atlantic route to India. After arriving in Karachi, India, the crews and aircraft were assigned to the four squadrons (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th) of the 3d Combat Cargo Group. To determine which squadron each arriving aircraft and crew was to be assigned was easy, the first 25 aircraft went to the 9th Combat Cargo Squadron, the next 25 aircraft to the 10th Combat Cargo Squadron and so on. Of the 100 aircraft and crews that left the states, 96 aircraft and crews safely reached the final destination. The crews of the missing four aircraft all arrived safely in theater. With the Group and Squadrons now formed, the crews were briefed for their final flights to Sylhet, India, via Agra, India. Colonel Charles Farr was assigned the commander of this new group, the 3d Combat Cargo Group, and he had much knowledge of supply tactics and was familiar with the China-India-Burma Theater after being Commander of the 443d Troop Carrier Group in the CBI. Initially the 3d Combat Cargo Groups aircraft were serviced by the 98th, 497th and 498th Air Service Squadrons. The 3d Combat Cargo Group's assigned Airdrome Squadron finally arrived in theater three (3) months after the group had begun flying combat missions.

The four Combat Cargo Groups used during WW II were not the only cargo-carrying Air Transport Units. There were in addition, the Air Transport Command AAFBU's, the Ferry Command Squadrons, the Troop Carrier Groups, the Air Commando Groups, the China National Aviation Company, Royal Air Force Groups, and Royal Australian Air Force Groups and Squadrons. They all served with distinction in the CBI Theater and all other theaters and helped carry the heavy load.

348th Airdrome Squadron
Supported 13th CCS.

Lineage: Activated 10 May 44 at Syracuse AAB, NY; Disbanded 8 Oct 48.

Assignments: I Troop Carrier Cd to Nov 44 (attached to 4th Combat Cargo Gp), 4th Combat Cargo Gp.

Stations: Syracuse AAB, NY 10 May 44; Bowman Fld, KY 1944, POE 1944, Sylhet, India Nov 1944 to Jan 45, Argatala to Jan 45, Chittagong to Jun 45, Namponmao to Sep 45.

348th Airdrome Squadron

Serviced 2nd Combat Cargo Group

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 8 Sep 2011

Updated:

Sources