

## 359<sup>th</sup> BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, MEDIUM



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

359<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 28 Jan 1942

Activated, 3 Feb 1942

Inactivated, 25 Jul 1945

Redesignated 359<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, 11 Jun 1947

Activated, 1 Jul 1947

Inactivated, 6 Sep 1948

Redesignated 359<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Medium, 27 Aug 1951

Activated, 4 Sep 1951

#### STATIONS

Pendleton Field, OR, 3 Feb 1942

Gowen Field, ID, 16 Feb 1942 (operated from Muroc, CA, 28 May-Jun 1942)

Alamogordo, NM, 18 Jun 1942

Biggs Field, TX, 5-24 Aug 1942

Molesworth, England, 12 Sep 1942

Casablanca, French Morocco, c. 31 May-25 Jul 1945

Andrews Field, MD, 1 Jul 1947-6 Sep 1948

Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, 4 Sep 1951

#### DEPLOYED STATIONS

Greenham Common, England, 17 Mar 1954-28 Mar 1954

Fairford, England, 28 Apr 1954-5 Jun 1954

Andersen AFB, Guam, 12 Jul 1956-4 Oct 1956

## **ASSIGNMENT**

303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group, 3 Feb 1942-25 Jun 1945  
303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group, 1 Jul 1947-4 Sep 1948  
303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group, 4 Sep 1951  
303<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Wing, 16 Jun 1952

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1942-1945  
B-17E  
B-17F  
B-17G  
B-29, 1951-1953  
B-47, 1953

## **COMMANDERS**

LTC Richard H. Cole,

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

Antisubmarine, American Theater  
Air Offensive, Europe  
Normandy  
Northern France  
Rhineland  
Ardennes-Alsace  
Central Europe  
Air Combat, EAME Theater

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation  
Germany, 11 Jan 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award  
1 Jan 1961-31 Mar 1962

## **EMBLEM**

On a shield, Air Force blue, within a border white, edged red, a stylized mythical Phoenix bird rising from an atomic cloud, all in variegated shades of yellow, red, white and blue. (Approved, 5 Dec 1955)

## **MOTTO**

CAVEAT EMPTOR--Let the Buyer Beware

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

Antisubmarine patrols off California coast, late May-early Jun 1942. Combat in ETO, 17 Nov 1942-25 Apr 1945. Apparently not manned, 1947-1948.

THE 359TH SQUADRON has had a lot of "firsts" during its first 300 missions. The first Medal of Honor awarded in the E.T.O. went to a 359th bombardier, First Lieutenant Jack Mathis, who died over his bombsight in the nose of the "Duchess" after dropping his bombs on Vegasack. As squadron lead bombardier he helped the Eighth Air Force do its first real precision bombing of its young career.

The Squadron's next claim to fame was in the old "Knockout Dropper," which was the first heavy bomber of the Eighth Air Force to finish 50 and then 75 missions. The old Fort lasted more than a year and a half of tough combat before it was finally retired to training centers in the U.S. along with the rest of the 359th's older planes. The group's first mission to Berlin was led by the 359th with Lt. Col. Richard H. Cole, the present commander, flying the lead.

The first gunner in the E.T.O. to complete 75 missions was T /Sgt. Kurt J. Hermann III, who flew 50 missions in Africa before being assigned to the 359<sup>th</sup> where he completed his next 25 hops. To movie-struck girl friends, 359th men can claim that the great Clark Gable, complete with ears and white silk muffler, flew his first mission in the old "Eight Ball." With such a large air force in operation now, it is hard to draw a fine line that proves that one outfit or another is first or best in anything. The main idea is to keep in the top section and there the 359th has always been. The engineering section has done its part by turning out an enviable record of mechanical efficiency in its aircraft. Longevity of service is the password here and is reflected in the records of planes like "Knockout Dropper" with 75 missions, "The Duchess" with more than 50, and "Thunder Bird" and "Old Black Magic" with more than 100 missions each.

No other squadron can boast of so many old-timers as these, and there is no reason to suspect that the "Thunder Bird" and "Old Black Magic" will not keep going indefinitely. Several members of the engineering department have won the Bronze Star and Legion of Merit for outstanding work in all kinds of weather, mostly bad. The Soldier's Medal for heroism was awarded to S/Sgt. Kenneth Shanahan and Pvt. Clyde V. Engholm of the refueling unit for extinguishing a fire in their refueling truck that threatened to engulf the base fuel dump.

Even with the pressure of 300 missions and countless "dry runs," however, the 359th men have found some time for fun. Taking an active share in sports, the 359th furnished star men for the baseball team. They include Sgt. William (Red) Craddock who pitched the "Hell's Angels" team to victory for the Eighth Air Force championship in 1943, and Lt. George Zitzler who hurled the team to the division championship and to the semi-finals in the Eighth Air Force in 1944. T /Sgt. Carl Murphy played first base for the team.

Some of the credit for the 359th's success in combat can be traced to its outstanding squadron commanders. Colonel Eugene A. Romig, now with the 94th Combat Wing, led the squadron through the early days when the flyers were first taking part in the aerial war on Germany. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. William R. Calhoun, who flew many long and tough missions with the 359th until he was relieved by Lt. Col. Cole.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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