

455th SERVICE SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

455th Service Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj Charles A. Spears

Cpt Dennis S. Rego

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

AMONG the men who enriched the American tradition with their sacrifices in the Philippine Islands were those of the Seventh Materiel Squadron, The name and spirit of this organization were bestowed on the men who now comprise the 455th Service Squadron: they upheld the honor well, both in Australia and near enemy lines in New Guinea. Their work for seventeen months in forward areas, during which time they experienced over one hundred high-altitude bombing attacks, was specifically commended by Major-General Ennis C. Whitehead, then Deputy Commander of the Fifth Air Force. In a letter to the Commanding Officer, 455th Service Squadron, dated May 10, 1943, he says; "The accomplishment of this Squadron in providing service facilities for the tactical units operating from this area in the early days of the war is without equal. The fact that your Squadron achieved such results in spite of the handicap of under-strength, in spite of the poor living 'conditions and poor diet, and in spite of the fact that the enemy made life quite miserable is worthy of the greatest commendations. . . . To the officers and enlisted men of the 455th Service Squadron I extend my congratulations for your wonderful performance and recognition of services rendered beyond the usual call of duty."

Most of the 455th men came to the Southwest Pacific Theatre in the earliest days of the war and were soon sent to New Guinea under the command of Major R. R. Barden. It was a time when trained troops were much in need, and they were transferred from one field to another as required by the military situation, They were at Jackson Field during the well known Fourth of July "celebration" in 1942, when the Japanese bombed the base continually for three successive days and nights, and while at Durand Airdrome they were at one time only fifteen miles from advanced enemy units. The 455th played an important role in the fights which halted the Japanese advance on Port Moresby and pushed them out of Papua. In October, 1942, the organization settled down at Fort Moresby. Originally a detachment of 115 men, it had by then doubled its roster by absorbing personnel from other service squadrons and from replacement depots. For its work on the island the entire Squadron Was cited for the Papuan campaign and several of its members received individual awards. The Purple Heart was awarded to Major Barden for action during air attacks. T/Sgt. Ziolko was awarded the Soldier's Medal for saving two Australian soldiers from drowning in shark-infested waters. While at Port Moresby, command was assumed on May 25, 1943, by Major Charles A. Spears, Jr.

After a year of servicing airfields in the Port Moresby area, the 455th Service Squadron, comprising 208 men and six officers, departed for Australia on October 19, 1943, and upon arrival was assigned to the 81st Air Depot Group at Eagle Farm Airdrome. Seventeen months in New Guinea had been quite a check on the men's social ambitions, and they did not wait long before entering the "social whirl" with Squadron parties at the Non-Commissioned Officers' Club in the Valley. The new amusements had, however, to be laid aside early in December, when men of the 455th Engineering Section worked long hours of concentrated effort with personnel of the 81st A.D.G. to erect and modify Thunderbolts then in special demand for the big offensives which pushed the enemy northward.

On the 26th of April Major Spears was transferred to Headquarters U.S.A.S.O.S. and Captain Dennis S. Rego assumed command.

In the first two months of operation of the Rotation Plan the 455th sent home 18 men, each of whom had seen meritorious service for many months in this theatre. Eventually it is hoped that the entire personnel will return to the States and to other theatres to carry on in the 455th tradition of service "beyond the usual call of duty"

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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