

907 EXPEDITIONARY AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

27 Transport Squadron constituted, 19 Jan 1942

Activated, 1 Feb 1942

Redesignated 27 Troop Carrier Squadron, 4 Jul 1942

Inactivated, 27 Dec 1945

907 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy constituted and activated, 20 Mar 1963

Discontinued 25 Jun 1968

27 Troop Carrier Squadron and 907 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy consolidated, 19 Sep 1985.
Unit remained inactive.

Redesignated 907 Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, 20 Mar 2003

STATIONS

Daniel Field, GA, 1 Feb 1942

Harding Field, LA, 10 Mar 1942

Kellogg Field, MI, 21 Jun 1942

Bowman Field, KY, 5 Aug 1942

Pope Field, NC, 4 Oct 1942

Lawson Field, GA, 2 Dec 1942

Dunnellon AAFld, FL, 14 Feb-13 Dec 1943

Sylhet, India, 12 Jan 1944

Yunnani, China, 21 May 1944 (detachments operated from Chanyi, Chengtu, and Kunming at

various times)
Chengkung, China, 15 Feb 1945
Liangshan, China, 13Aug-27 Dec 1945
Glasgow AFB, MT, 20 Mar 1963

ASSIGNMENTS

89 Transport Group, 1 Feb 1942
10 Transport (later Troop Carrier) Group, 15 Jun 1942
Tenth Air Force (attached to Troop Carrier Command, Eastern Air Command), 12 Jan 1944
443 Troop Carrier Group, 6 Mar 1944-27 Dec 1945
91 Bombardment Wing, 20 Mar 1963-1968
Air Combat Command to activate or inactivate at any time on or after 20 Mar 2003

ATTACHMENTS

62 Transport (later Troop Carrier) Group, 21 Jun-5 Aug 1942
69 Composite Wing, 21 May 1944-Jul 1945

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-48, 1942
C-49, 1942
C-53, 1942-1943
C-47, 1942-1945
KC-135

COMMANDERS

1Lt Thorpe, 1 Feb 1942
1Lt Johnson, 5 Mar 1942
Capt Ralph A Hering, 1 Jul 1942
Maj Clayton Stiles, 13 Aug 1942
Capt Emerson M. Beard, Jr., 30 Mar 1943
Maj Henry P. King, 10 Apr 1943
Maj William D. Strong, 5 Jul 1943
Maj Lewis C. Burwell, Jr., 30 Nov 1943
Maj Talmadge E. walker, 27 Apr 1944
Maj Lewis C. Burwell, Jr. 20 May 1944
Capt John C. Conney, 25 Jan 1945
Lt Col James H. S. Rasmussen, Feb 1945
Maj John C. Cooney, 5 Oct 1945



Lt Col Irwin Stuhr, #1963

HONORS

Service Streamers

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

India-Burma

China Defensive

China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Over and through a light blue disc, border red, piped white, a black and white checkered taxicab, winged gold, resting on a white cloud formation in base. (Approved, 25 Feb 1943.)



Over and through a light blue disc, border red, piped white, a black and white checkered taxicab, winged gold, resting on a white cloud, formation in base. (7 Dec 1942)

The "Flying Taxi" insignia was used by the squadron from its inception through its arrival overseas. Drawn by a member of the squadron, a former employee of the Walt Disney organization, name unknown.



"Hump T Dump": On a argent and blue disc bordered red, argent and blue, a cartoon character depicting "HUMPTY DUMPTY" argent, riding a parachute with mountain tops in the background. The parachute is red, blue and argent, repeated blue and red. The lower portion of the parachute is laced with Chinese, Burmese and Indian characters depicting the name of each country.

The "Hump T Dump" patch was designed by SSgt. Earl J. Hohlmayer, per the request of Major Lewis C. Burwell, Jr. commander of the unit at the time. It was his desire to have an insignia more closely related to the squadron's efforts in the China-Burma-India Theater. Sergeant Hohlmayer was serving in the Twenty Seventh as a parachute rigger.

Although never submitted to the Special Service Division of the United States Army Air Forces for approval. The rocker at the bottom of the design, carrying the Twenty Seventh's name, was added in the post war years. The design in its entirety was adopted by former members of the squadron assembled, by unanimous vote, in the post war years.

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Training of transport and glider pilots, and later replacement crews, 21 Jun 1942-30 Nov 1943; aerial transportation in CBI, 13 Jan 1944-13 Aug 1945. Moved to India in Jan 1944 and on second day in the area dropped 72,000 pounds of food and ammunition to British Colonial troops. Beginning 10 Feb 1944 the squadron flew badly needed supplies into Northern Hukawng Valley. During the airborne invasion of Burma, towed gliders during assault landing, transported troops, mules, vehicles, and other supplies at improvised airstrips. Missed earning assault landing credit by a few hours to a day or more during airborne assaults at Broadway (5 Mar), Chowingtree (6 Mar), and Myitkynia, Burma, (17 May), although in the first two instances squadron planes participated in the assault by towing gliders with assault troops aboard. Until late May 1944, the 27th began supporting British columns moving from the north in Burma, then

began supporting forces west of the Salween. From the time the first Chinese troops pushed into Mamien Pass, until Namkam fell to the assault by troops from Burma and China thus opening the Stilwell Road, the 27th flew ammunition, food, clothing, and equipment to forces which could be supplied only by air. Later in the war the squadron flew gasoline over the "Hump" dropped Chinese forces, resupplied forward fighter and bomber fields in eastern China, and performed routine air transport. At the close of the war, the squadron evacuated American units from small fields isolated parts of China and flew prisoners of war out of former Japanese prison camps in Manchuria including LTG Jonathan M. Wainwright and numerous other allied general officers and civilian government leaders.

The twenty seventh troop carrier squadron was constituted as the twenty seventh troop transport squadron on the 19th of January 1942, activated at Daniel Field Augusta, Georgia 24th of February 1942 redesignated as the 27th Troop Carrier Squadron 24th of July 1942 and deactivated in China on the 27th of December 1945.

In a rare general order, the Army Air Force Combat Command created the 89th Transport group consisting of five squadrons while normal policy called for a group to consist of four. The 27th's life with the 89th was short lived, as the squadron was transferred out and sent on through most of its glorious career as a unique singular unit. It was to carry out missions never before assigned in such broad scope to any unit of the troop carrier command.

Its early responsibilities were that as a training unit for squadrons and personnel, with graduates going on to all corners of the globe, carrying out their assignments with high valor to advance the efforts to rid the world of the axis and Japanese aggressors. The squadron earned the honor of being rated the number one training unit in the first carrier command. Twice alerted for overseas duty, their orders were aborted by high command in Washington, with the reasoning being that it was far too valuable as a training unit in the United States.

In late 1943 Japan invaded, India with the British and Indian forces having a most difficult time of it. Allied forces submitted an urgent request to high command requesting the 27th's assignment to the theatre, due to its outstanding record of night flying in all types of weather and over all terrain. The squadron had been assigned to the tactical air command on 29th November, only to once again see orders aborted by high command on the 30th, with new cut sending the unit overseas immediately. A change in commanders was made on the 6th December, and additional personnel brought into bring the squadron up to full strength. Its air echelon flew to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana to accept thirteen new Douglas C47 aircraft then on to Morrison Field, Florida where a fourteenth aircraft and crew joined the flight. The formation departed Florida on 25th December 1943, flying the southern Atlantic route for assignment to the China - Burma - India theatre, arriving in Karachi, India on 10th January 1944.

Assigned to the Southeast Command, under the command of Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the unit flew on to Sylhet, Assam, India. Immediately they began flying combat missions around the clock, over and behind enemy lines giving assistance to the surrounded forces - often landing on grass strips behind the lines to evacuate wounded personnel. The

ground echelon departed the United States on 13th January 1944, joining the operation on 28th March.

With the defeat of the Japanese at Imphal, India, the squadron immediately began flying support to help rid North Burma of enemy control. From Northeast India, General Stilwell (with Chinese forces) and Major General Orde Wingate (and his beloved "Chindits") entered Burma with two columns each driving to the South and Southeast. This was followed with the famed "Merrill's Marauders" (American forces) entering the country at the same point, driving towards the industrial and rail center of Myitkyina.

In August 1943 at the "Quadrant Conference" in Quebec, Canada, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshall Stalin; gave a green light to General Orde Wingate and his dream of a long range penetration invasion behind enemy lines. The entire operation, including the furnishing of supplies and evacuation of wounded, being carried out from the air. The maneuver was to be used in the invasion of Burma from central east India. The 27th was assigned, along with the First Air Commando, to partake in this invasion entitled "Operation Thursday". The flights, towing at times two gliders each over the mountains, were made in the middle of the night in extreme weather. The invasion called for airstrips, often surrounded by Japanese forces, to be established in the middle of the jungles to facilitate air support short landings.

The taking of Myitkyina by the allied forces saw the 27th transferred into the 14th Air Force "Flying Tigers" in China, under the direct command of Major General Claire Chennault. The squadron at once partook in the "Salween Campaign" - the invasion of Burma from west China.

With the opening of north Burma by the Allied forces, the squadron turned its efforts to the Eastern China offensive operations. During this period of history it gave support to the O.S.S. (forerunner of the CIA) and "Saco" in their guerilla activities at and behind enemy lines, in addition to guerilla units in French Indo China. The latter was a secret endeavor with much action kept from the press and the public.

The squadron evacuated Admiral Miles, Commander of "Saco", from a small grass strip behind enemy lines in Southeast China, after the third assassination attempt on his life. The 27th also liberated General Jonathan Wainwright from behind enemy lines in Manchuria, giving him freedom after over three years in five Japanese prison camps.

In the final days of the war in China, the squadron was directly under the operational orders of the O.S.S., through the headquarters command of the 10th Air Force. They flew covert and search missions behind enemy lines in Manchuria, China and French Indo China.

The 27th Troop Carrier Squadron was attached to the 62nd Transport Group whilst stationed at Kellogg Field, Michigan. The squadron operated from several satellite bases while stationed in China including in part: Chanyi, Chengtu, Chihkiang, Kunming, Luliang, Mangshit, Mengtze, Nanning, Paoshan, Peishiyi and Tengchung.

On January 12, 1944, we buzzed the little jungle strip at Sylhet, Assam, northeastern India with our fifteen C-47's in formation and landed in rotation. The air echelon of the 27th Troop Carrier Squadron had reached its new home. The flight had started from Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Ind., just before Christmas. Of the several hundred men, not one of us had ever flown the route before or had even been in that part of the world.

Brig. Gen. W. D. Old, who had flown in from his headquarters at Comilia 150 miles south, met us on the ramp. Sylhet had been an RAF installation while under construction. General Old declared it operational as of the following day, January 13, and appointed me, as the senior tactical officer, base commander. This was an additional duty to my primary job as squadron commanding officer. He issued operational orders to commence air dropping supplies to British ground troops fighting 200 miles to the east in the Tiddim area in the mountains on the Burma border.

We had less than 24 hours to find a place to sleep, something to eat and work out our plans and loading of supplies. Our new home was over-run by thousands of Indian laborers, monkeys and jackals. The transition to U.S. command was quite simple and informal. Major Walker, British engineer, hauled down his Union Jack and we ran up the Stars and Stripes on the little thatched roof basha that served as base headquarters.

There were many problems, most of them housekeeping and logistical. The only transport we had were the bicycles we had brought with us and a few British lorries, with right-hand drive and inexplicable gear shifts. Our flight missions went well from the start and American ingenuity solved the rest. A few days after we arrived a young British captain, named Peter Homfray, brought me a note from Maj. Gen. Orde Wingate, commander of the 3d Indian Division, requesting indefinite use of an isolated building on the base with 24-hour security guard. Captain Homfray's mission was classified "Most Secret." The requested arrangements were made and Homfray moved in. I saw him occasionally at the mess tent, but had no earthly idea what he was up to.

As the weather got warmer and the first few pre-monsoon clouds began to form, our little outpost at Sylhet became a beehive of activity. General Wingate moved his headquarters from Imphal to our base and General Merrill and his Marauders began their march from the north down central Burma. Brigadier Bernard Fergusson led his British column south down the Chindwin River which separates India from Burma. Our air drops were diverted from the Tiddim area to supply these columns prying their way south through the jungles.

Many distinguished and be-ribboned visitors began to arrive in Sylhet, both British and American. Finally Lord Mountbatten showed up with his Hurricane Fighter escort. General Wingate then called us all together and laid out his plans for the airborne invasion of Burma known as "Operation Thursday." This would be a daring attempt to interdict the Japanese supply lines in central Burma and cut off the enemy to the north. In the summer of 1943, Wingate had led a long-range penetration, column overland, behind the Japanese lines which had

been moderately successful in harassing the enemy and slowing up his advance through Burma. During this trek he had discovered several large savannahs, or jungle clearings, along the Irrawaddy River which bisects Burma from north to south. He reasoned that with proper air support and air supplies he could establish "strongholds" at these areas from which his long-range columns could operate with all supplies, evacuation of wounded, and rotation of personnel being accomplished by air.

He took his dreams and his plans to the Quebec conference where Roosevelt and Churchill approved. The tactical and logistical problems implicit in this operation were formidable. Gliders had to be towed in under cover of darkness, since Japanese fighter air fields were all through central Burma. The first several gliders to each target would carry heavily-armed infantrymen to counter any enemy resistance. The next several sorties would carry small earth-moving machines to carve out landing strips. Successive waves would bring in men, mules and initial stores of supplies, weapons and ammunition.

On Sunday, March 5, 1944, we climbed into our cockpits ready for the take-off. Some 200 pairs of gleaming white nylon tow ropes were strung out on the grass field at Lallaghat, India, behind the nearly 100 C-47 airplanes. Each tow plane was to pull two gliders, each nearly as large as the mother ship, and loaded to gunwales. Although we had practiced towing two empty gliders, these were loaded to a gross weight of 16,000 pounds each. No one really knew whether the contraption would fly, much less clear the 8,000-foot Chin Hills to the east. The Douglas designers had limited the weight of this airplane to 26,900 pounds, all up. This was a total facing us of nearly 50,000 pounds. With our engines ticking over at the take-off end of the field we watched a little knot of officers gather around the operations tent across the runway. Then the radio blared "All pilots report to operations." A last minute photo reconnaissance by one of Col. Phil Cochran's P-51's showed that one of the targets - Chowringhee - had apparently been barricaded by huge teak logs dragged in by elephants. The implications were obvious. The Japs had discovered our plan and were going to force all traffic into Broadway some 50 miles to the north, where a welcoming party would be waiting. Anyway, the decision was "All flights into Broadway."

At full take-off power the engines roared and the ship shuddered a moment and the wheels slid a little in the grass. Finally it moved and we gathered speed. Just before the jungle rushed to meet us the ship staggered off. The gliders had flown first. We had to make six orbits over the field to gain enough altitude to clear the mountains, and head east, on course.

We lived a hundred years and died a thousand deaths on that 250 mile flight in the darkness to an unknown, and perhaps an unrecognizable destination. At the power settings necessary to maintain 90 miles an hour, fuel gauges were winding down at an alarming rate, and the engines were heating badly due to the excess power and lack of cooling slip stream. Then there were several patches of turbulence which caused the gliders to wallow badly. Controlling the airplane was quite a problem.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, we spotted the Irrawaddy, turned north for 10 minutes

and then saw a clearing in the moonlight that we hoped was "Broadway." There were no lights in the air nor on the ground nor any radio communications. We were 250 miles behind enemy lines. We had burned two-thirds of our fuel going half the distance. The inter-phone from glider to tow ship crackled. It was Col. John Alison, flying one of the gliders. He was to assume command of all operations of Broadway. "Alison overboard, this looks as good as any."

We landed back at Lallaghat with 40 gallons of fuel in the tanks and 30 gallons of sweat in the cockpit. Being the first ship back, the moment we had cleared the runway and cut the engines, General Old jumped on board for a report. We told him that the double tow was murder and that we were going to lose a lot of gliders and men. From that point on all was single tow. Sadly our prophecy was true. A lot of brave men went down with their gliders in the jungle.

In retrospect though, the operation was a huge success, despite the losses. No enemy action was encountered until several days later at which time we had air-landed thousands of troops, weapons and supplies. The first landing at "Broadway" by C-47 was made less than 24 hours after the first glider had landed.

Other target areas were opened in the same way - White City, Aberdeen, and Chowringhee. We flew supplies, evacuated wounded and prisoners and rotated personnel every night until the monsoon hit full force in mid-May. Supplementing our air landings were many air drops to the heads of the far-ranging columns east and south of the "strong-holds;" some nights were so dark it was hard to tell whether you were dropping on the fires that marked the L-shaped drop zones in the mountains or the Big Dipper.

About March 1, which was a few days before D-Day for operation "Thursday," Peter showed up at my headquarters with Maj. Gen. Ramsey, deputy to General Wingate. They led me to Peter's secret hide-away. It was filled to the rafters with little dummy British soldiers in full battle dress. Each had his own parachute and was stuffed to the gills with delayed fuse explosives. They were to be dropped at half light in jungle clearings the morning of the airborne invasion some 50 miles north of the real targets, as a diversion. In poor light the illusion is that these are full-sized paratroopers just a bit further away. Once on the ground the little fellows were programmed to "pop off" for about 14 hours.

The native jungle grapevine went into action and the trick worked perfectly. This mock battle drew most of the Japanese forces in that area of Burma into the fake invasion spot. "This accounted for the lack of opposition on the initial sorties into Broadway."

Peter had been the major domo for a similar operation earlier, in the invasion and recapture of Madagascar, off the east African coast. Peter and I became fast friends. He was a charming young Englishman. I couldn't help but think that in an all-out war there's a role for everyone - even an illusionist.

In late March after the show had been running for several weeks, he came to my basha one evening after supper and asked if I would take him out to Broadway the following evening. It

was his turn to rotate as one of the leaders of the long-range penetration columns operating from this "strong-hold." I had a bottle of Scotch which I had nursed all the way from Puerto Rico, so we talked far into the night, since I was not required to fly again until the following night. His combat tour would end April 23, my birthday. I promised to pick him up and bring him back to Sylhet. "Broadway" by then had become a hot spot with nightly attacks by the Japanese on the air field. I arrived April 23, on schedule, and waited quite awhile. A fire fight between the Japs and the Gurkhas across the strip was raging. However, no sign nor news of Peter. All my inquiries at Broadway and subsequent ones at Wingate Headquarters in Sylhet came to naught except that "Captain Homfray was missing in action."

Wingate had been killed himself just a few nights prior on his way back from "Broadway" to Sylhet in a B-25. I had seen him just a few moments before he took off from "Broadway" and told him the trip out was frightful and that we were going to wait until just before dawn when the thunderstorms had subsided somewhat. They found him, famous sun helmet and all, on the mountainside. His death was a tragic loss. He was a fascinating man and a military genius.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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