

38 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, HEAVY



MISSION

LINEAGE

38 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 20 Nov 1940

Activated, 15 Jan 1941

Redesignated 38 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy

Inactivated, 20 Mar 1946

STATIONS

March Field, CA, 15 Jan 1941

New Orleans, LA, 3 Jun 1941 (detachment operated from Savannah, GA, 8-14 Dec 1941)

Muroc, CA, 24 Dec 1941

March Field, CA, 9 Feb 1942-28

Kahuku, TH, 20 Oct 1943

Kwajalein, 13 Mar 1944

Saipan, 4 Aug 1944

Wheeler Field, TH, 17 Mar 1945

Kahuku, TH, 21 Sep 1945-20 Mar 1946

ASSIGNMENTS

30 Bombardment Group, 15 Jan 1941-20 Mar 1946

WEAPON SYSTEMS

YB-17, 1941
B-18, 1941-1942
LB-30, 1942
A-29, 1942
B-25, 1942
B-24, 1942-1946

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater
Central Pacific
Air Offensive, Japan
Eastern Mandates
Western Pacific

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



38 Bombardment Squadron emblem



38 Bombardment Squadron emblem: On a black disc, border yellow, a gray, three-quarter, lower-front silhouette of a B-24 aircraft, in flight toward dexter, over a knight in armor on back of charger, all light turquoise blue, holding a red lance and a shield, divided per bend red and green,

behind two, gray wings displayed and conjoined in base. (Approved, 28 Apr 1945)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Antisubmarine alert at Savannah, 8-14 Dec 1941; antisubmarine patrols, Jan 1942-Jul 1943. Replacement training, Jun 1942-Jul 1943. Combat in Central and Western Pacific, 16 Nov 1943-19 Feb 1945.

In March, the Seventh's heavies, in conjunction with the heavies of the Thirteenth Air Force, began striking at the great bastion of Truk. The first raid was made by 22 B-24s of the 38th and 392nd Bomb Squadrons, staging through Kwajalein, on the night of 14 March. Targets were the airfield on Eten Island and the seaplane base on Dublon Island, but weather broke up the formations and only 13 planes managed in attack. At night, exactly two weeks later, the second raid was flown by 21 B-24s of the 30th Bomb Group. Weather again interfered and bombing was scattered and light. The next night, 29 March, the 27th and 98th Bomb Squadrons hit the airfield on Param Island and the seaplane base and a tank farm on Dublon. On the night of 30 March, 21 B-24s of the 11th Group bombed the two airfields on Moen Island at Truk, having staged through Eniwetok, and on the night of the 31st 14 Liberators from the 38th and 392nd Squadrons dropped on Dublon Town and tank farm.

On the night of 2 April, eleven B-24s hit Eten and Dublon Islands at Truk, and the following night 20 B-24s from the 26th and 38th Squadrons raided Truk. On this occasion there was effective night interception by Japanese planes, and two B-24s of the 26th BS failed to return. Subsequently the Seventh's B-24s raided Truk on the nights of 7, 9, 13 and 16 April and every other night thereafter for the remainder of the month. From the 9th, two squadrons were employed per mission on an alternating basis, two squadrons dispatched by the 11th Group, then one from the 11th and one from the 30th, then two from the 30th, after which the rotation was repeated. By the end of April the two groups had flown a grand total of 329 effective sorties against Truk, dropped 7 M tons of bombs and lost but five planes. During March, April and May, the heavies also flew twelve missions, 204 sorties, to Wake Island to neutralize the airfields there.

On 10 August, the 30th bombed Iwo Jima in the first raid against these new targets. The next day it struck at Chichi Jima and a few days later hit Haha Jima for the first time. The 30th's B-24s flew 10 missions to the new targets in August and 22 in September. From one of those September missions, one which went to Iwo Jima, came the saga of "Chambermaid", a B-24J of the 38th Bomb Squadron. As the "Chambermaid" released her bombs above the designated target, flak hit the nose compartment and knocked out some of the hydraulic lines, putting two turrets out of operation. Then the Japanese fighters, which had been waiting for the flak to cease before beginning their attacks, came in on the plane. A 20 mm shell hit behind the Copilot and wounded him. The throttle controls for the two left engines were damaged, and those two engines ran wild, eating up fuel. The outboard engine on the right side was throwing oil. A shot blew off the top turret and wounded the gunner in it. The plastic dome flew off and tore a hole in one rudder. Another shell ripped a hole in the top of the left wing gas tank. The Navigator and an observer

were wounded, but "Chambermaid" cleared the target area, surrounded and protected by four other Liberators flying formation on it. The pilot, Lt. William V. Core, nursed the plane toward home, hoping to make it back to Saipan. To make it worse he had to fight a tropical storm part of the way back, then at last Saipan came into view. With wounded aboard there was no chance of bailing out of the badly damaged Liberator. He had to try and set it down despite the damage it had suffered. Two men managed to kick the nose wheel down into place, but when the crew cranked the main gear down by hand only the right wheel came down. Japanese fire had severed the cable to the other. The loss of the hydraulic system also left the plane without brakes. A crash landing was inevitable, but to slow the plane down when it landed, and give them all a chance to survive, the crew anchored two parachutes at the waist windows and one at the tail, to be released and act as brakes as soon as "Chambermaid" touched the runway. The plane came in straight, touched down at 105 mph and the chutes were opened. The "Chambermaid" rolled along in a straight line for a few seconds and then fell off on the left and skidded across the field out of control until it slid off the runway, struck a parked trailer, hit a revetment and stopped. When the plane finally lay still it was found that the fuselage behind the bomb bay door had cracked wide open. The gap in the fuselage was two feet wide, and the tail section was bent so that it made an oblique angle with the rest of the plane. But "Chambermaid" had come home, and all aboard would live to fly another day, though the wounded would be in a hospital for a while first.

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Created: 1 Jan 2025

Updated:

Sources

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