

43 AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

43 Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 20 Nov 1940
Activated, 15 Jan 1941
Redesignated 43 Bombardment Group, Heavy, 21 Sep 1943
Inactivated, 29 Apr 1946
Redesignated 43 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy and activated, 1 Oct 1946
Redesignated 43 Bombardment Group, Medium, 2 Jul 1948
Inactivated, 16 Jun 1952
Redesignated 43 Operations Group and activated, 1 Jun 1992
Inactivated, 1 Jul 1994
Activated, 1 Apr 1997
Redesignated 43 Airlift Group, 1 Mar 2011
Redesignated 43 Air Mobility Operations Group, 14 Jun 2016

STATIONS

Langley Field, VA, 15 Jan 1941
Bangor, ME, 28 Aug 1941-17 Feb 1942
Sydney, Australia, 28 Mar 1942
Torrens Creek, Australia, 1 Aug 1942
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 14 Sep 1942
Dobodura, New Guinea, 10 Dec 1944
Nadzab, New Guinea, 4 Mar 1944

Owi, Schouten Islands, 2 Jul 1944
Tacloban, Leyte, 15 Nov 1944
Clark Field, Luzon, 16 Mar 1945
Ie Shima, 26 Jul 1945
Ft William McKinley, Luzon, 10 Dec 1945-29 Apr 1946
Davis-Monthan Field (later AFB), AZ, 1 Oct 1946-16 Jun 1952
Malmstrom AFB, MT, 1 Jun 1992-1 Jul 1994
Pope AFB, NC, 1 Apr 1997

DEPLOYED STATIONS

RAF Station Marham, England, 16 Aug-16 Nov 1949

ASSIGNMENTS

General Headquarters, Air Force (later, Air Force Combat Command), 15 Jan 1941
Northeast Air District (later, 1 Air Force), Jan 1941
I Bomber Command, 5 Sep 1941
United States Army Forces in Australia, 28 Mar 1942
Allied Air Forces, Southwest Pacific Areas, 18 Apr 1942
Fifth Air Force, 3 Sep 1942
V Bomber Command, 5 Sep 1942
Far East Air Forces, 3 Dec 1945-29 Apr 1946
Fifteenth Air Force, 1 Oct 1946
Eighth Air Force, 19 Nov 1946
43 Bombardment Wing, 17 Nov 1947-16 Jun 1952
43 Air Refueling Wing, 1 Jun 1992-1 Jul 1994
43 Airlift Wing, 1 Apr 1997
USAF Expeditionary Center, 1 Mar 2011

ATTACHMENTS

3 Air Division, 16 Aug-16 Nov 1949

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1941-1942, 1942-1943
B-18, 1941
B-25, 1941
PT-17, 1941
A-29, 1941
LB-30, 1941
B-24, 1943-1946
B-29, 1946-1948
B-50, 1948-1951
KC-135, 1992-1994
C-12, 1994
C-130, 1997

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Harold D. Smith, 15 Jan 1941
Lt Col Francis B. Valentine, 1 Mar 1941
Maj Conrad H. Diehl Jr., 18 Feb 1942
Col Roger M. Ramey, 21 Oct 1942
Lt Col John A. Roberts, 30 Mar 1943
Col Harry J. Hawthorne, 24 May 1943
Lt Col Edward W. Scott Jr., 18 Nov 1943
Col Harry J. Hawthorne, 8 Feb 1944
Col James T. Pettus Jr., 18 Sep 1944
Maj Paul B. Hansen, 8 Sep 1945-unkn
Col James C. Selser Jr., 5 Oct 1946
Col William E. Eubank Jr., Apr 1948
Col Dalene E. Bailey, Jul 1948
Col Alvan N. Moore, 3 Jan 1949-16 Jun 1952
Col Larry L. Evanoff, 1 Jun 1992
Col Kenneth Mills, by Dec 1993-1 Jul 1994
Col Gordon M. Ettenson, 1 Apr 1997
Col Jimmie L. Simmons Jr., 30 Apr 1999
Col Alexander M. McDowell, 11 Apr 2001
Col Gerald E. Szpila, Aug 2004
Col Michael E. Thornton, 21 Jun 2006
Col Donald F. Kimminau, 29 Jul 2008
Col Paul M. Kucharek, 7 Jul 2010
Col Daniel H. Tulley
Col Kenneth E. Moss
Col Kelly R. Holbert
Col Jimmie L. Simmons Jr., 30 Apr 1999
Col Alexander M. McDowell, 11 Apr 2001
Col Gerald E. Szpila, Aug 2004
Col Michael E. Thornton, 21 Jun 2006
Col Donald F. Kimminau, 29 Jul 2008
Col Paul M. Kucharek, 28 Jun 2010
Col Daniel H. Tulley, 10 Jul 2012
Col Kenneth E. Moss, 5 Aug 2014
Col Kelly R. Holbert, 14 Jun 2016

HONORS

Service Streamers

Global War on Terrorism, GWOT-S.

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Japan
China Defensive
Papua
Guadalcanal
Northern Solomons
New Guinea
Bismarck Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Papua, [Aug] 1942-23 Jan 1943
Bismarck Sea, 2-4 Mar 1943

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jun 1992-30 Jun 1993
1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000
1 Jul 2001-30 Jun 2002
1 Jul 2002-31 May 2004
1 Oct 2004-30 Sep 2005
1 Jan-31 Dec 2005
1 Oct 2005-30 Sep 2006
1 Jun 2006-31 May 2007
1 Sep 2007-31 Aug 2009
1 Sep 2009-31 Aug 2011
1 Sep 2012-31 Aug 2013
1 Sep 2013-31 Aug 2014
1 Sep 2014-31 Aug 2015
1 Sep 2015-31 Aug 2016

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WW II)

EMBLEM



A drop of rain fell into a placid pool starting a circle of ripples that grew larger and ever larger, until its widening rim touched upon the distant shore line where it lapped upon the beach. A bomb fell from the sky into Hawaiian waters one peaceful Sunday morning. The circle of American fighting planes, and bombers, and ships, and men, and weapons of every description that it started is growing larger and more tempestuous with every passing hour; the storm of its widening arc will some day break upon a distant shore. The 43 Bombardment Group, lately of Langley Field, Virginia, is already a part of that giant ripple. Its movements are slow, for it does heavy work; but its bombs drop surely and swiftly. A Walt Disney hippo travels on each fuselage, tearing through the skies in a tiny plane, and dropping bombs with a kind of careless accuracy.





Per fess nebuly Or and Azure, all within a diminished bordure Yellow. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "43 AIRLIFT GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The nebuly fess reflects the Group's interlocking of personnel and mission. (Approved, 31 Jan 1942; modified, 18 Nov 1993; newest rendition approved 18 May 2016)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 43 Bombardment Group, constituted on 20 November 1940 and consisting of the 63rd, 64th, and 65th Squadrons and with the 13th Reconnaissance Squadron as an attached unit, was a part of the 1st Air Force. Activated on 15 January 1941 at Langley Field, Virginia, it began the war flying B-17 ASW patrols from Pope Field, North Carolina and MacDill Field, Florida.

It wasn't until Friday, 27 February 1942 that the 13th Reconnaissance Squadron --later designated the 403rd Squadron-- arrived at Melbourne, Australia with B-17's. The other squadrons followed, the 64th Squadron arriving in Sydney, Australia on Sunday, 15 March, 1942 and the 63rd and 65th Squadrons arriving on Saturday, 28 March, 1942, both equipped with B-17s.

The Group's early training at Langley Field was hampered by the lack of trained personnel and airplanes. As a result, the 43 did not accomplish much in the way of training until after it moved to Bangor Air Base (later Dow Field), Maine, on 28 August 1941. After the United States entered the war, the Group's pilots, in addition to their routine training, flew submarine patrols along the New England coast.

Early in February 1942 the 43 Bombardment Group was alerted for shipment overseas and on the 17th the ground personnel moved to the Boston Port of Embarkation; the air echelon remained behind and did not rejoin the rest of the Group until the summer and fall of 1942. On 18 February the ground echelon sailed for Australia aboard the Queen Mary. After stops at Rio de Janeiro,

Brazil; Capetown, South Africa; and Fremantle, Australia, the 43 landed at Sydney on 28 March and took station at the Randwick Race Track.

In May and June, the unit's squadrons were moved to other bases in Australia for preliminary combat training, but by 1 August the 43 and its elements were reunited at Torrens Creek. The following day the Group received its first plane, the Chief of Seattle, a gift from the city of Seattle, Washington. On 18 August four more B-17's arrived from the United States and were assigned to the 63rd Squadron; the rest of the Group's aircraft continued to arrive through November.

By the end of January 1943 the 43 Bombardment Group's aircraft strength had been greatly reduced as a result of the hard service the B-17's had seen for more than six months. Of the 55 B-17's on hand, approximately 20 were undergoing depot repair at all times. Perhaps 50 percent of the remainder were in daily combat mission, and a quarter of these were used regularly for reconnaissance flights. Consequently, there were no more than 14 planes for a striking force. As a result, during the next few months the 90th Bombardment Group --destined to be a rival of the 43 Group-- began to take over a major share of the heavy bomber operations in the Southwest Pacific.

March 1943 was highlighted by the 43 Bombardment Group's participation in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, one of the decisive victories for the Allies in the Pacific War. For its outstanding performance of duty in action during the three-day period from 2 to 4 March, the Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

Few if any of the Group's attacks against Rabaul in 1943 were carried out against shipping because the Japanese were making greater use of the more distant harbor at Kavieng, New Ireland. The most devastating anti-shipping blow of April and May 1943 was directed against a convoy which had been tracked to Kavieng. In a period of four days beginning on 1 April, 21 B-17's of the 43 Group and 9 B-24's (probably from the 90th Group) harassed ships at anchor in Kavieng harbor.

After the Bismarck Sea engagement, the group turned their attention toward the reduction of enemy airdromes in New Guinea and New Britain and destruction of shipping in the neighboring waters. Targets hit in the succeeding weeks included Wewak, Madang, Rapopo, Arawe, and Casmata. Most of those attacks were carried out by a small number of planes because most of the Group's B-17's had been damaged in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea.

From May through July 1943 the Group continued to hammer away at the enemy's bases in New Britain and New Guinea.

By the end of September, the entire Group had completed the conversion to B-24 aircraft. The 63rd Squadron, the last of the Group's units to convert, flew its last mission in B-17's on 19 September, when it bombed a large store and personnel area at Cape Gloucester, New Britain. Earlier in the month, on 4 September, 12 of the Group's B-24's were assigned the task of destroying a heavy concentration of enemy gun emplacements on the south and the east runway at Lae, New Guinea. That attack was flown in support of the 9th Australian Division, which had made a landing at Hopoi in preparation for a coordinated drive toward Lae.

After one mission to Wewak on the first of December, the 43 devoted its efforts to the neutralization of enemy airdromes in New Britain during the remainder of the month. The Group also softened up the Cape Gloucester and Arawe areas in preparation for the invasion of New Britain. December 1943 was one of the 43's busiest months of the war because maximum effort was called for every day. From 13 to 15 December the 43 Bombardment Group softened up the Arawe area.

On 26 December, when the Marines landed at Cape Gloucester, all four squadrons of the Group dropped 229 of 276 bombs on a narrow strip of rain forest west of Silimati Point, which contained enemy gun positions, stores, and troops. That same afternoon, 21 B-24's blanketed Hill 660, a highly fortified region south of Silimati Point. During the last two days of the month, after rendering effective support to ground forces in New Britain, the Group directed its attacks against anti-aircraft positions and supply dumps at Alexishafen, New Guinea.

During January 1944 Alexishafen continued to be a priority target; the 43 hit such familiar places as Wewak, Hansa Bay, and Arawe, and extended its range to include targets in the Admiralty Islands. Airdromes, gun emplacements, and supply and personnel concentrations at Hollandia, Wewak, and Hansa Bay were the primary targets in April 1944. On the 28th of that month, "Ken's Men" participated in the first Allied raid on Biak; 15 B-24's dropped their bombs on Mokmer airdrome. The following month Bial and Wakde were hit often. After Wakde fell into Allied hands late in May, the 63rd Squadron, primarily an anti-shipping unit, staged through that base and began to fly weather reconnaissance missions to the Philippines.

In June 1944, the 43 Bombardment Group left targets in New Guinea to the medium bombers; more profitable targets for the Group were Biak, Noemfoor, and the elaborate network of Japanese airdromes in the Vogelkop Peninsula. Unfortunately, the Vogelkop airfields, for all practical purposes, were out of the Group's range; therefore, principal targets during the month were Biak and Noemfoor. By staging through forward airstrips, the 43 was able also to hit the strongly defended enemy islands of Palau and Yap.

From July through November 1944 the 43 Bombardment Group attacked enemy airdromes in the Halmahera Islands, Ambon-Ceram area, and on Celebes. In October the 43 participated in the historic Balikpapan raids, which were designed to knock out the important oil refineries and storage facilities in that area. On 4 November the ground echelon of the Group arrived at Tacloban, Leyte. That field was not ready for B-24 operations, so the air echelon remained on Owi and staged through Morotai to hit targets in the Philippines.

By 17 January 1945 the 43 was conducting regular missions from Tacloban. Principle targets during the month were airfields on Luzon, particularly Clark Field and others in that immediate area. Toward the end of the month the Group began to attack industrial targets on Formosa. With the exception of the first six days of February, when the Group blasted Corregidor and furnished close ground support in the areas of Fort Stotsenburg and Ipo Dam on Luzon, the unit's primary targets were on Formosa. From March through July 1945 the Group continued to hit targets on Formosa.

Late in July the 43 moved to Ie Shima from where it conducted operations against the Japanese home islands.

In the maximum effort which was conducted against Japan from Ie Shima during the period 24 July - 15 August 1945, the Group reported that it sank 25 Japanese vessels, including one aircraft carrier, for a total of 115,850 tons; another 42,050 tons were probably sunk or damaged. In addition, parked aircraft on four of the major Japanese airfields were destroyed or rendered unserviceable, railroad yards on Kyushu were hit repeatedly, and coastal shipping between Honshu, Kyushu, and Korea was virtually eliminated.

On 10 December 1945 the 43 Bombardment Group moved to McKinley Field, Luzon, and approximately five months later, on 29 April 1946, the Group was inactivated.

During the next period of activation, between Oct 1946 and Feb 1951, the group trained and conducted long-range test missions, including the first nonstop flight around the world (26 Feb-2 Mar 1949), accomplished by Capt James G. Gallagher and his crew in a B-50 called "Lucky Lady II".

Deployed to England for training, Aug-Nov 1949. Not operational after 10 Feb 1951, with the flying squadrons attached directly to the 43 Wing for operations. Inactivated on 16 Jun 1952. Between Jun 1992 and 1 Jul 1994, the group flew air refueling missions in training exercises.

In 1997, assumed an airlift mission. Cooperated with U.S. Army airborne organizations at nearby Fort Bragg, taking part with them in joint training exercises. Crews and aircraft deployed to Europe and later to Southwest Asia to support contingency operations such as enforcement of no-fly zones over Iraq and for expeditionary force rotations.

After terrorist attacks on the U.S. on 11 Sep 2001, deployed resources in the global War on Terror.

Executed precise rapid outload, en route support, and mobility operations with the focus on ensuring elements of the U.S. Army's 82 Airborne Corps deployed rapidly, anywhere in the world, from Green Ramp, Pope Field, NC, 2008-.

Participated in OPERATION UNIFIED RESPONSE that included deployment of Fort Bragg, NC, soldiers and humanitarian items to Haiti after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit that country in Jan 2010.

The 43 Airlift Group streamlined its unit structure by combining several previous squadrons into two, newly activated ones during a ceremony at Pope Field, N.C., July 1. The group stood up the 43 Air Mobility Squadron to replace the groups' inactivated aircraft maintenance and aerial port squadrons. Likewise, the 43 Air Base Squadron replaces Pope's previous logistics readiness and force support squadrons into a single unit. The move aligns the 1,200-strong 43 AG with a 27-percent manpower cut enacted as part of an Air Force-wide Fiscal 2015 force reduction. The groups' C-130s will continue their assigned task supporting Joint Special Operations Command and Army airborne units at neighboring Ft. Bragg. 2015

Hundreds of Airmen and special guests welcomed a new family to the Gryphon team as Col. Kelly Holbert assumed command of the 43 Air Mobility Operations Group from Col. Kenneth Moss during a change-of-command ceremony here June 14. Brig. Gen. James Scanlon, mobilization assistant to the commander at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center, presided over the ceremony, which also included the inactivation of the 2d Airlift Squadron and the redesignation of the 43 Airlift Group as the 43 Air Mobility Operations Group. The redesignation as the 43 AMOG is a name change which ensures the group's designation is more closely aligned with its mission here at Pope.

2016 Any aircraft that flies into Pope Army Airfield, Col. Kelly Holbert will know about it. But Holbert's unit, the 43 Air Mobility Operations Group, has no aircraft of its own. As the only en route operations group in the continental U.S., the unit manages transient aircraft and the joint missions they fly on with Fort Bragg paratroopers. From airfield management and air traffic control to transient aircraft maintenance, fueling and loading, the 900-Airmen group stands by ready to help. "In one way or the other we touch every aircraft that comes in and out of Pope," said Holbert, who took command of the group when it activated in June. With no assigned aircraft, the group, which also administratively supports another 1,000 Airmen from other units in the area, has helped take on additional joint training missions.

In recent years, Pope Airmen saw about 27 missions per month from the Joint Airborne/Air Transportability Training program, an online system used by military units to request air support. In the past year, they've seen up to 34 missions per month or about 20 percent more. The group is "built to provide that excess capacity as we continue to grow the numbers of transient aircraft coming through to support airborne operations at Fort Bragg," Holbert said. That support was evident during an emergency deployment readiness exercise in mid-July that had 15 aircraft move and airdrop more than 750 Army paratroopers and heavy equipment over Fort Polk, Louisiana, in 96 hours -- a feat done on the heels of redeploying from Europe for exercise Swift Response.

"This is a no-notice mission as part of our global response force capability," said Army Lt. Col. Mark Ivezaj, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment. Ivezaj's unit is the GRF battalion, which trains to quickly deploy to crises anywhere in the world. "Repetition is the key to success," he said. "In order for our paratroopers to be confident in what they do they have to practice it and that relies heavily on the Air Force. "We've developed really good relationships over time with the Air Force to ensure that we're meeting the global response force intent." A strong partnership is also needed when missions may not go as planned due to weather, maintenance or competing priorities. "There's always going to be challenges in every type of training event or any type of operation we're going to do," Ivezaj said. "At the end of the day we all have to remain flexible." Air Force units have responded to random setbacks and an increased need for joint training by sending extra aircraft to Pope Airfield.

So far this fiscal year, the Air Force has already provided at least 56,000 jumps to Army paratroopers, about 6,000 more than fiscal year 2015. Those numbers will likely grow as the Air Force continues to support the GRF mission. "We have to have that capability for our national leaders and we're dedicated to ensure that it does exist today and it exists in the future," said Lt. Gen. Sam Cox, commander of the 18th AF, which oversees the group. As part of that, the 43 AMOG has a unique role at Pope Airfield in getting units the joint training they require to respond to emergencies. "They can integrate with the Army to ensure that they're successful in whatever

operations they're going to do there," Cox said. "We have the assets that can get (paratroopers) where they need to go."

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

War Insignia Stamp Album, Vol. 2, Postamp Publishing Co., 1942.