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25th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON Office of the Historical Officer

3 January, 1945

DECEMBER HISTORY

Moving into the last month of 1944, the 25th Bombardment Squadron continued its accelerated pace and five times dealt crippling and death dealing blows to the Japanese. And not without a dear price. Losses were higher this month than any of the previous ones, and most of the men going down were what might be called "charter" members of the 25th, helping to train it and themselves in the States, and following it out to combat and giving it the final name and record that it has.

News from home in the form of letters was poor for the most part, due to the Christmas rush. The greatest majority of the month no one received much news, only on two or three days, and then it all came at once. Mail is the yardstick of domestic happiness around here, and lack of it is easily apparent.

Americans have landed on Leyte Island and Mindoro Island in the Philippines, and the Twenty-First Bomb Command, comprised of B-29's, is based on Saipan Island, and is now hitting Tokyo with ease, compared to the trouble and hardship this Command undergoes to get at the Jap mainland. These factors, plus nine months in this Theatre, give rise to three main questions, namely: "When are we going to move, and where, and when are we going back to the States?" Much time is spent in speculation and although no one seems to know anything at the present, the guesses range from the North Pole to the South Pole, and if there was a Pole on the Equator, that would be included also.

Christmas day itself was a holiday, and fortunately, dinner was served all day long. For the first time, the Chakulia Army Air Base was alerted, and eight Japanese Bombers were reported to be in the area, Kharagpur was bombed, but no bombs fell here.

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Since the beginning of operations there have been many Japanese fighters shot down. Below is a list of those #25 claims to have been confirmed. There are around fifteen other claims which are still pending at Twentieth Bomb Command Headquarters.

<u>Plane No.</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Gunner</u>	<u>Type Claim</u>
269	Capt Harte	Capt T. S. Gossage	Damaged
344	Lt Col Schaal	1 st Lt Max Leavitt	Probable
237	Maj Doyle	1 st Lt I Burness	Damaged
298	Maj Swancutt	1 st Lt Joe McGraw	Destroyed
298	Maj Swancutt	1 st Lt D Alexander	Destroyed
298`	Maj Swancutt	1 st Lt J Middleton	Damaged
539	Capt Richard	S Sgt Lee Chapman	Damaged
237	Maj Doyle	S Sgt	Destroyed
294	Maj Kingsbury	Sgt K H Bransdorf	Damaged
344	Capt Thomas	S Sgt C J Baraglia	Damaged
298	Lt Braley	Sgt Stain	Damaged
274	Maj Swancutt	S Sgt A J Yosco	Destroyed
398	Maj Mallory	Sgt Daviner	Damaged
398	Maj Mallory	Sgt Daviner	Damaged
331	Capt Gaughan	Sgt Brown	Damaged

On December 2, B-29's began leaving Chakulia for Hsinching. The target was once again to be the Omura Aircraft Factory at Omura, Japan. Due to very adverse weather conditions over Japan, the take-off time was postponed three different times. Finally on December 5 it was decided to change the target, and the Aircraft Factory at Mukden, was chosen as the primary target.

Of the 27 aircraft airborne a total of 23 bombed the primary target in two formations. The first formation consisted of 12 B-29's and it bombed from approximately 22000 feet with good observed results which were confirmed by strike photos. The center of the bomb pattern was somewhat to the right of the aiming point but considerable damage was believed inflicted. The strike photos also disclosed the beginning of a smoke screen started by the Japanese which quickly and effectively blanketed the target area including the arsenal and airfield. The remaining eleven aircraft arrived over Mukden approximately twenty minutes later, at which time the target was completely covered by the above mentioned smoke screen. It is believed that most bombs from this formation fell in the railroad yards considerably south of the target area due to some aircraft in the formation releasing accidentally prematurely. Very considerable amounts of ice and frost on the windows was experienced. It was necessary to depressurize, scrape, and do everything else in order to see. At this altitude, the temperature was round 4? degrees below zero.

Enemy air opposition over Mukden was moderate. The first formation found enemy fighters waiting for them over Anshan, which had been a previous target. When it was apparent that the formation was proceeding to Mukden the enemy immediately followed and were in position over Muken for the later formations. Most fighter attacks were broken off around eight hundred yards.

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Our B-29's claimed a total of three damaged, one probably destroyed, and six damaged enemy fighters.

Antiaircraft fire was meager and inaccurate and inflicted very little damage.

Several facts stand out in connection with this mission, first of which is the great variety of enemy fighters encountered. Practically all types, even including obsolete Claude and Val were reported along with the newest and most modern type of fighters. The second fact is the icing and frosting on windows presents a serious problem both for personnel safety and accurate bombing. Finally, more interceptions are occurring in the route to China than ever before.

Eight of the 23 B-29's bombing the primary target were flown by the 25th Bombardment Squadron crews. Captain Franks, due to pressure oil temperature on #2 engine could not proceed to the primary target at Mukden and bombed a Jap airfield at Henchang. Captain Richard, due to excessive cylinder head temperature on #3 engine could not proceed, so bombed a target of opportunity.

The following airplane commanders and their crews participated in the mission:

Major Weschler	Captain Schaal
Major Mallory	Captain Meyer
Major Turner	Captain Franks
Captain Thomas	Captain Richard
Captain Sanders	Lieut. Braley

One man from the 25th failed to return from the mission. Sgt. McCabe, was gunner for Captain Thomas, was flying with Captain Varnoff of the 44th Squadron. This plane lost a propeller from #1 engine, and the entire crew bailed out. Major Weschler, although not injured, was just scratched on the left hand by a Jap bullet which was fired from a fighter.

December 14th was the blackest day in the modern history of this Squadron. Being out on what normally should not be what is considered a tremendously difficult mission, more men were lost than ever before.

Twelve B-29's were dispatched to attack the BurmaVI Railroad Bridge. No antiaircraft or fighters were encountered. Two bombing runs were made in an attempt to carry out visual bombing but it was not possible to see the target so the formation proceeded to the assigned initial point, Kaingthan Island, for the secondary target, the central Railway Station and Yards at Rangoon, Burma. An excellent bombing run was made in CAVU weather at 20000 feet and the formation was excellent. Up until this time no opposition had been encountered. Immediately after "bombs away" there was a tremendous explosion which literally scattered the formation. Some of the crew members were of the opinion that the explosion was a tremendous barrage of flak, but it is believed that it was caused by one or more of the bombs exploding in

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mid air. The mid air explosion could have been caused by the bombs colliding just after release or by a lucky flak hit on the bombs. Whatever was the cause, the explosion threw the formation into complete confusion with planes going in every direction, some with engines on fire and others apparently out of control. One B-29 was definitely seen to go down in the target area. No fighter opposition was around at the time.

Following the explosion the formation commander was never able to completely reassemble the formation. It is believed that a total of four B-29's, including the one seen to go down in the target area were lost as a direct result of the explosion. The reports on anti-aircraft fire at Rangoon differ very considerably with some crews describing it as moderate and accurate and others as meager and inaccurate. It is not definitely known whether flak was observed prior to the explosion or not.

Of the eleven aircraft over Rangoon only two were not to return directly to Chakulia. Four were forced to land at Chittagong due to battle damage and one landed at Cox's Bazaar and was further damaged when it ran off the end of the runway.

1st Lt Halloran S. Soules, navigator for Major Doyle, was killed either by flak or the explosion and was given a military funeral at Chakulia.

Following is a list of 25th Squadron personnel who are listed as missing:

Captain C. C. Meyer	Captain H. L. Gerber
1 st Lt. L. F. Coffin	1 st Lt. R. W. Conway
1 st Lt. R. N. Derrington	1 st Lt. S. B. Hall
1 st Lt. M. B. Burke	1 st Lt. C. L. Lancaster
1 st Lt. J. Levine	1 st Lt. I. Burness
2 nd Lt. J. J. Walsh	2 nd Lt. R. D. Allen
M Sgt. C. W. Whitley	Sgt. J. M. McCarthy
M Sgt. R. Montgomery	Sgt. T. A. Birkmaier
Sgt. F. R. Edwards	Sgt. W. T. Blank
S Sgt. H. B. Greene	Sgt. C. L. Cummings
S Sgt. B. L. Dow	Sgt. A. J. Rice
T Sgt. E. F. Trinkner, Jr.	T Sgt. J. Vermillion

The above was the heaviest single loss of the entire Group since the beginning. B-24's and Catalinas, also B-29's were sent on search missions, but to no avail.

Of the eleven planes bombing the target, five were from the 25th Bombardment Squadron.

Following is a list of the airplane commanders and their crews:

Major Doyle	Captain Franks
Captain Meyer	Lt. Braley
Captain Gerber	

Four days later, sixteen planes had flown the Hump and were airborne on their way against one of the biggest supply centers the Japanese have.