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SECRET

40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
25th Bombardment Squadron
Office of the Intelligence Officer
APO #631

1 June, 1944

SUBJECT: 25th Bombardment Squadron History from 1 March to 1 April, 1944

TO : 40TH Bombardment Group History Officer.

This period of time was truly eventful for the 25th Bombardment Squadron and the events recorded here should be a prelude to the most startling operations to come forth out of the entire Air Forces. For in this period, the first Super Fortresses left their native land with the purpose of destroying the Japanese and making a rubble and shambles out of the cities they inhabit and occupy.

In Pratt, Kansas, crews, from Airplane Commanders to Tail Gunners, were busy working twelve or more hours each day, putting in specified modifications with their own labor. Snow, ice, and bad weather conditions added to the difficulty of the job. The project of modification was expedited somewhat by assistance from the outside, in the form of technically experienced personnel. In addition to completing the entire project, the 25th, with B-17F's, flew a tactical PCM, and took a Wing Mission for the 40th Group. Upon completion of this, a commendation came down from the Wing to the 25th, on the manner in which the mission was flown.

Nine B-29's were assigned to the Squadron and this necessitated solving the problem of hangar space. Three missions were flown on each B-29, for a total of fifteen hours: a slow time mission, an instrument calibration, and a high altitude check. Four engines were changed on every B-29 with the exception of two, and all of this was pure Squadron Duty, since the Maintenance Squadron was already on the seas.

After the aforementioned missions, the 25th broke all relations with B-26's, A-25's (there was one), and now "old" Flying Fortresses, to personally take charge and live with the biggest, fastest bombers in the world. Dramatically enough, General ARNOLD, Chief of the Air Forces, arrived at Pratt and spent March 10th with the bomber crews and their planes. The purpose of his visit was to give the men a good send-off, as well as to view the finished product ready for combat.

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The morale of the Squadron at this time was indeed good, and all Squadron personnel were ready and anxious to get at the task which lay ahead, whatever that may be. No disciplinary action of any form had to be taken against any members of the Squadron. Concisely speaking the Squadron was well knit, a strong unit.

One of the most difficult decisions to make was that of assigning certain crews to fly, and other to go by Air Transport Command, and still others by boat. The following crews were chosen to fly B-29's to their destination:

**Lt. Col. WARREN S. WILKINSON
Major WILLIAM C. KINGSBURY
Major WOODROW P. SWANCUTT
Major DANIEL T. ROGERS
Major BENTON W. O'NEIL
Captain GARTH E. DOYLE
Captain MURR E. SKOUSEN
1st Lieutenant JAMES A. SLATTERY**

Two additional crews flew with the above, those of Captain CLARENCE E. FRANKS, and Captain ROBERT E. COPLEY. Captain ROBERT E. GAUGHAN flew as Co-Pilot on the 40th Group plane. 1st Lieutenant DORSEY B. THOMAS flew by B-29, but his crew came by boat. The remaining Airplane Commanders came by Air Transport Command or by Boat:

**Major GEORGE T. WESCHLER
Captain CLARENCE E. FRANKS
Captain HENRY L. GERBER
Captain CORNELIUS C. MEYER
Captain ROBERT E. COPLEY**

One fact of great historical note is that Major GEORGE WESCHLER was up at five each morning, drilling back and forth across the sand at Casablanca. This went on for the most part of two weeks. The remainder of the time he spent standing in a line of thousands of men, waiting for a piece of sandy spam. It seems he got mixed up in some sort of Infantry or Light Tank outfit. His already great respect for the Air Corps has doubled.

The B-29's departed Pratt for Gander Lake. Fran Gander, the route was to Marrakech, Morocco, non-stop over the ocean. This is the longest over-water hop made by Air Transport Command or any other Branch. Average time for B-29's over the ocean was approximately ten and a half hours. Then to Cairo, Egypt, Karachi, India, and the final destination, Chakulia, India.

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The average time for the planes to reach Chakulia was around ten days. Each plane flew individually. One plane was lost at Cairo, that of Major O'NEIL's. None of the crew members were injured, although the plane was a total wreck.

By the end of the month, the 25th Squadron, along with the 1st Maintenance Squadron, was at its destination and lined up on the runway ready for action.

Sidney L. Truesdale
SIDNEY L. TRUESDALE,
Captain, Air Corps,
Historical Officer.

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