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HEADQUARTERS 40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP Office of the Historical Officer

Group History 1 September through 30 September 1944

The month of September marked a turning point in the history of the 40th Bombardment Group. At XX Bomber Command, Major General CURTIS LEMAY, who had taken over as Commanding General, immediately began to initiate some of the practices of the Eight Air Force that had proved so successful in the European Theater.

Following conferences with Group and Squadron Commanders, General LEMAY laid plans for a twelve plane formation to increase fire power and to improve the bombing pattern. From each squadron lead crews were selected for training in formation leading. These crews were sent to Dudhkundi on Detached Service, where a training school was established for lead crew from all the Groups of the XX Bomber Command.

Meanwhile a full training program was set up at Chakulia. Classes were started in Target Identification to be followed by classes in Navigation, Bombing, Aircraft Recognition, Gunnery and other specialized subjects. On 14 September Col BLANCHARD called a meeting of all pilots and co-pilots to explain the order of the new 12 plane formation. Some lead crews returned from Dudhkundi, and actual practice began in formation take-off, assembly, and bombing technique.

The problem of flying 12 plane formations was not as easy as it might appear, even to the veteran pilots of the 40th Group. Assembly points might be several hours of flying time away from the home field, as, due to the extreme length of B-29 missions it often would be impractical to fly the whole route in formation. With little, if any, reserve gasoline, and the necessity for accurate cruise control, designated planes for one formation could not be expected over the assembly point at exactly the same time, therefore it would be up to every pilot to use initiative, good judgment and teamwork in the rapid improvising of 12 plane units on the spot.

Though training became the keynote for the month of September the enemy were not to be denied the drone of B-29 airplanes over their Empire. Two missions were carried out during the month, both of which were directed against the SHOYA STEEL WORKS at ANSHAN, MANCHURIA. Not one airplane was lost by the 40th Group in either operation.

Frustrated in their attempts to down the B-29's in the air, the Nips adopted a new strategy. Early in the morning of 9 September 1944 following the B-29 attack on ANSHAN, Jap bombers attacked the field at A-1. Combat crews and detachment personnel had retired after a long hard day, when, at about 0300, a two ball alert was sounded. Gun crews took to their stations

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in accordance with Base Defense Plan. Minutes later a three ball alert warning came from Fighter Control. Gas masks and helmets were broken out, slit trenches were occupied. Finally four Jap planes came over the field, dropping light demolition and fragmentation bombs. B-29 #254 was slightly damaged and two men S Sgt EDWARD M. CYRUS and Pfc VENNER McNEIL were injured. After first aid treatment the men were evacuated to Chengtu hospital and thence to India for surgery and treatment.

A second Japanese attack followed the ANSHAN raid of Sep 26th. Bomb, mostly fragmentation were dropped around the field from 1945 to 2245. Some damage was inflicted on B-29's #407, 241, 288, 306 and 269, out they were all able to take off within a day or two.

The narratives from the Group Consolidated Mission Reports covering the Sep 9th and Sep 26th raids are as follows:

“In accordance with Field Order #8, XX Bomber Command, dated 28 Aug 44 and supplementary orders, the 40th Bomb Gp started dispatching B-29 aircraft from the rear area to A-1 on 5 Sep 1944. Sixteen aircraft were dispatched 5 Sep, 10 aircraft were dispatched 6 Sep, and two aircraft were dispatched 7 Sep. All 28 aircraft arrived at A-1 without incident.

“Starting at 072240 Z a total of 25 B-29 aircraft were airborne to bomb the primary target, the Showa Steel Works at ASHAN, MANCHURIA. The last aircraft was airborne at 072320 Z. All aircraft carried eight 500# GP bombs with fuzing of .1 second nose and .025 tail. Two aircraft could not be airborne due to engine changes, the necessity for which developed during the trip from the rear area, and aircraft #288, a special photo aircraft was not scheduled to go on the mission.

“Of the 25 aircraft airborne 23 reached the primary target and dropped a total of 169 bombs in the target area. Of those reaching the primary target one aircraft inadvertently salvoed its bombs near the IP and one aircraft was able to release only one of its 8 bombs due to rack malfunction and was forced to salvo the remaining seven bombs in the Gulf of PO.

“Weather at the primary target was reported from 3/10 to 6/10 undercast and visual observation of bombing results was difficult. Crews able to observe bomb impacts reported good results.

“Two aircraft due to mechanical failures were unable to proceed to the primary target and bombed the tertiary target, the railroad yards at SINSIANG, China with excellent observed results, dropping a total of 16 bombs. Weather was reported as CAVU with slight haze.

“Antiaircraft over the primary target was meager to moderate and generally inaccurate.

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“Enemy fighter opposition at the primary target was weak with few attacks being pressed home. Our aircraft claim two enemy aircraft destroyed, one probably destroyed and one damaged.

“No fighter opposition or antiaircraft fire was encountered at the tertiary target.

“The enemy once again tried air to air bombing of several of our ships with ineffective results.

“A basic four plane diamond formation was employed by our aircraft.

“Twenty-four of our aircraft returned safely to base and one was forced to land at HANGHUNG due to a feathered engine and resultant lack of gas. Aircraft #503 sustained minor battle damage from antiaircraft fire.

“During the early morning hours of 9 Sep a small force of enemy aircraft raided A-1 dropping clusters of fragmentation bombs and several bombs of a 500# G.P. type. Only minor damage was inflicted on parked aircraft and several personnel sustained minor injuries. The complete absence of ground and air defenses permitted the enemy to drop his bombs from a very low altitude and it is fortunate that more serious damage was not inflicted.

“In connection with this raid, there is ample evidence of fifth column activity in the airfield area with sufficient assistance being rendered the enemy to enable him to accurately locate the runway. This assistance took the visible form of flares and a burning rice paddy.

“While the raid should occasion no surprise, since it is difficult to understand why the area has not been raided hereto fore, the fifth column activity warrants immediate investigation. Ground defenses are totally lacking and until adequate night fighter defense is available future raids should be expected, especially whenever missions necessitate large numbers of B-29 aircraft to be parked on the field.

“It is believed enemy intelligence is accurately and quickly informed of all traffic activity on this airfield.”

“In accordance with FO #9, XX Bomber Command, 40th Bomb Group dispatched a total of 27 B-29 aircraft to A-1 starting on 23 Sep 44. Of these 27 aircraft one aircraft, #288 a special photo ship, was not required to participate in the mission.

“Of the 26 aircraft at A-1 on D-day, 26 Sep 44, 22 were airborne in the mission against the Showa Steel Works, ANSHAN, MANCHURIA. The first aircraft took off at 252254 Z and the last aircraft at 252327 Z. Four aircraft were prevented from participating due to mechanical difficulties.

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“Weather at time of take off was very rainy with low scud and ground fog and assembly of aircraft was very difficult and hazardous. Fifteen aircraft of 40th Bomb Group proceeded in small groups to ANKANG where a 15 ship formation was formed and proceeded on route to primary target.

“Three aircraft were forced to return early due to mechanical difficulties. Of there, two landed with bomb load intact and the third bombed the RR yards at SINSIANG (L. R. T.) by radar with unobserved results.

“Seventeen aircraft reached the primary target and of these 16 aircraft dropped a total of 162 500 lb GP bombs, .1 second nose and .025 second tail fusing. One aircraft although over the primary target, was unable to release due to rack malfunction and was forced to bomb a target of opportunity with unobserved results.

“Weather at the primary target and from the IP in was 10/10 undercast with numerous cloud layers at bombing altitude of 24,000' T. As a result formations were badly scattered and considerable hazard resulted from endeavors to maintain formation at all. The necessity of changing leaders at last moment due to radar set malfunction added to the difficulties. Most aircraft made two runs due to leader being unable to obtain satisfactory radar picture on first run.

“Anti-Aircraft at the primary target was moderate and generally accurate. None of our aircraft sustained any flak damage.

“Enemy fighter opposition at the primary target and tertiary target was weak and few attacks were vigorously pressed home. None of our aircraft sustained any battle damage from enemy aircraft and claims of one destroyed, two probably destroyed, and six damaged, were made by our crews.

“Only one instance of high flying barrage balloons was reported. Single crew member of aircraft #503 reported sighting eight possible balloons at 20,000' about 25 miles SW of target.

“One aircraft, #294, reported possible air to air bombing over primary target.

“One aircraft bombed the harbor facilities at DAIREN visually with reported fair results.

“Two aircraft bombed targets of opportunity with poor results. Due to adverse weather conditions the hazards involved in endeavoring to fly large formations were extremely high and the difficulties of maintaining formation positions under these conditions coupled with the unusual amount of radar malfunctions resulted in very considerable confusion over the target. Although aircraft reported as bombing in formation the variance in headings coupled with the poor visibility at time of bomb release in all probability resulted in what amounted to individual releases on whatever aircraft were in sight. While bombing results were unobserved due to

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complete undercast it is considered doubtful if much damage was inflicted on the primary target.

“All aircraft returned safely to A-1, landing from 261041 Z to 261129 Z.

“The night of 26 Sep 44, A-1 was subject to bombing by Jap aircraft which resulted in varying degrees of damage to five B-29 aircraft and installations. No personal injuries were sustained. Since no ground defenses or night fighters protection was made available the enemy was unmolested during the attack.”

Group Statistical Section prepared some interesting figures on the two raids, which in tabulated form, are as follows:

	Mission #8	Mission #9
Aircraft over Primary Target	23	16
Flying time (Form #1)	12 hrs 5 min	12 hrs 17 min
Weight on take-off	128071 lbs	131094 lbs
Fuel on take-off	6750 gals	7173 gals
Fuel consumed	5715 gals	6047 gals
Fuel remaining	1045 gals	1036 gals
Bombs Carried	8 500 lb GP	10 500 lb GP
Air miles flown	2821	2856
Gals fuel used per air mile	2.027	2.119
Gals fuel used per hour	473	493

The above figures represent the average for all aircraft participating.

Aircraft strength at the beginning of Sep included 37 B-29's of which 32 were combat planes and 5 were tankers. During the month 7 new combat B-29's were delivered while 2 combat B-29's and one B-29 tanker were lost making total strength at the end of the month 41 B-29's comprising 37 combat planes and 4 tankers.

The two combat B-29 losses for the month included #326. Actually this airplane made a forced landing at HSICHANG, CHINA on 15 Jun 44, but it was not until September that it was determined that the airplane could not be recovered, and it was dropped to survey.

The other combat B-29 was lost in an unusual accident at Chakulia on 16 September. Major DONALD W. ROBERTS and his crew from the 44th Squadron were giving #268 an operational test flight following considerable overhaul and repair work. The flight was routine until just prior to landing when #2 engine burst into flames. Before Major ROBERTS could land the engine dropped off the wing. Major ROBERTS made a fine emergency landing but the left wheel folded and the plane slid along to a stop about 90 degrees to the runway. The crew wasted not time in getting out, but what was left of the airplane was carried to the salvage dump.

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B-29 tanker #222 was lost in a crash landing at Chakulia on 11 Sep. Capt WILLIAM G. RENFRO and his crew from the 45th Squadron had arrived in the traffic pattern after a six hour flight from A-1, with all engines running and fuel gauges indicated a small reserve. Suddenly, however, #3 engine cut out, followed by #4 and then #2. Capt RENFRO pulled up wheels for a crash landing, but all engines regained power and an attempt was made to get into position for a normal landing. In another minute, however, all engines quit and it was necessary to make a steep 180 degree turn back to the field for a crash landing. All crew members and passengers escaped without injury, but a fire broke out after landing and despite efficient work by the fire fighting teams on the base, the airplane had to be designated as salvage.

Cargo Operations

B-29's from the 40th Group delivered 88060 gals of fuel to the forward area in September. This was accomplished in 41 trips, 22 by tankers and 19 by combat planes. In addition 700 gals of oil, 14 passengers and 63879 lbs of miscellaneous freight were carried safely over the hump. Total weight of all deliveries amounted to 298 tons.

Averages were as follows:

Average take-off weight tankers	133,023 lbs
Average take-off weight combat B-29's	131,461 lbs
Average gas delivered tankers	2692 gals
Average gas delivered combat B-29's	1517 gals
Average total weight delivered tankers	16884 lbs
Average total weight delivered combat B-29's	10153 lbs

September marked the end of the monsoon season. Only 9.61 inches of rainfall were recorded during the month. Temperatures were somewhat higher than in August with an average daily maximum reading of 92 degrees. On the other hand the nights were pleasant, the average daily minimum was 76 degrees, and the overall average for the month was 84 degrees. September 18th was the hottest day with a maximum temperature of 96 degrees. Most rainfall in any 24 hour period was on September 30th when the total precipitation amounted to 2.9 inches. September 30 was also the coolest day with a minimum reading of 73 degrees.

On September 30 Lt Col FRANK J. MC GINITY, Group Operations Officer received the welcome news that he would return to the United States. Lt Col MC GINITY had been one of the older officers of the 40th Group, and was well liked by all. His older and newer friends tended him a final farewell in the Group Officers quarters.

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