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HEADQUARTERS 40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
Office of the Historical Officer

APO Number 631
23 January 1945

GROUP HISTORY

1 December thru 31 December 1944

During December a total of five missions were run, four from the advance base in China and one to the south from Chakulia. Our losses were greater than in any previous month: nine planes were lost, four men were killed and 55 are carried as missing. Of these 55, however, information has been received that 11 are in safe hands and "walking out."

The training program was given increased emphasis. Additional synthetic training aids were put into operation and visiting instructors contributed much to the program.

Christmas was celebrated with a day off for all personnel on the Base except the few unfortunate individuals who of necessity were required to remain on duty. Several hours of Christmas night were spent in slit trenches when Japanese planes visited the XX Bomber Command bases in India for the first time.

At the end of the year the 40th Group, during seven months of combat operations, had participated in 22 missions directed against twelve primary targets. These targets ranged from Palembang in Sumatra to Mukden in Manchuria and they were attacked from bases in India, Ceylon and China. The longest mission – to Singapore – involved a round trip of approximately 3790 statute miles; the shortest – to Hankow – a distance of 1188 statute miles.

Since combat operations began, on 5 June, the 40th Group has lost 33 B-29's. Only four – possibly six – of these losses were considered due directly to enemy action; four were lost as the result of one or more of their own bombs exploding just beneath a formation, one was lost to friendly action, one burned in the parking area at Chakulia and the remainder were all operational losses.

During this period approved claims of the Group totaled 35 enemy aircraft destroyed, 14 probably destroyed and 29 damaged. Still pending at the end of the year were claims for seven destroyed and 15 damaged which, if approved will make a grand total of:

Destroyed	:42
Probably Destroyed	:14
Damaged	<u>44</u>
	100

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December began with threatening news of the Japanese advance northwestward from Linchow in the direction of Kweiyang. In addition, photo reconnaissance revealed about 100 enemy transport planes in the Hankow – Wuchang area and there were persistent reports of several thousand Jap paratroops in enemy held China. Although not considered probable there was the very definite possibility of a Japanese paratroop attack on the B-29 bases in the Chengtu area.

At A-1, the 40th Group Advanced Base at Hsinching, defense and evacuation plans were reexamined and further perfected. On 6 December all personnel were issued side arms and ammunition with orders to carry them at all times, and on the 9th a meeting was held in the briefing building on the line at which time everyone was given the latest news on the ground situation and all details of the defense plan explained. The Detachment gave a sign of relief when news was received that on the 4th the Japs had begun to withdraw southward from Tuyun, and by the 15th life had returned to normal.

In the meantime the 40th Group had begun dispatching planes to A-1 on 2 December in accordance with XX Bomber Command Field Order No 19.

This mission was originally planned as a strike against the aircraft factory at Omura, Japan. However, take-off was delayed three times due to adverse weather conditions at the assigned primary target. Finally, on 6 December, it was decided to change the target to Manchuria Aircraft Manufacturing Plant at Mukden, Manchuria. The Mukden Plant had never been bombed although B-29's had on three occasions visited Ansham which lies about 30 miles to the south.

By the evening of the 6th a total of 29 planes were at A-1 ready for the mission. One plane, #6298 ("Katie") of the 25th Squadron, flown by Capt DORSEY B. THOMAS, blew a tire on landing which resulted in a partial ground loop as the brakes were applied. The plane nosed into a ditch paralleling the runway on the west and suffered considerable damage to the nose gear. (Photos 1, 2) It was flown back to India with the nose gear braced in the down position on 8 January.

Beginning at 0230 China Time on the 7th (061930Z) a total of 27 B-29's were airborne in 55 minutes. Two planes were ground aborts due to mechanical difficulties encountered during the final run-up.

Of the 27 planes airborne 23 reached the primary target in two formations, the first of which bombed from 22,000 feet at 0827 China time (0127Z) with good observed results. Strike photos (Photos 3, 4) indicated that the M.P.I. was to the right (south) of the aiming point (the approximate center of the triangular shaped plant area) but recon photos taken several days later revealed considerable damage to the southern edge of the target area and to the hanger line of the adjacent airfield. Strike photos also disclosed the beginning of an effective black smoke screen which quickly and effectively blanketed the entire target area, Mukden Arsenal to the west and the airfield to the south.

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When the second formation was approaching the Su Hu Ton Railroad Yard about nine miles south of Mukden, one plane, leading an element, was hit by enemy fighters and released all his bombs. Every other plane in the formation dropped on him except the lead plane. Due to heavy fighter attacks and extreme frosting inside the planes the others could see nothing and were just waiting for the leader to drop his bombs; therefore they released on what they thought was the lead plane. Some damage was done to rolling stock and trackage of the above mentioned railroad yard. The lead bombardier, Lt JESSE OHR (44th Squadron), released his bombs using an off-set aiming point and flashes visible through the black smoke in strike photographs indicate that the bombs from this plane fell in the southeast corner of the target area.

In order to alleviate the frosting of the glass inside the nose sections due to -45 degree temperatures outside, many of the planes depressurized. This was successful in some instances, unsuccessful in others. In every case the consequent low temperatures inside of the planes plus the necessity for wearing oxygen masks contributed to the loss of efficiency on the part of the crews. Bombardiers repeatedly scraped off the frost but to no avail. As a result, bombardiers could not use the forward gun sight or clearly see the target and the other planes in the formation. This is a major problem of all cold weather operations in the B-29 and no satisfactory solution has yet been found.

Enemy opposition over the target was moderate. The first formation saw fighters waiting for them over Anshan – apparently the Japs expected the Showa Steel Works to be the target again – but when it became apparent that the Superforts were heading for Mukden the fighters followed and were in position for all the later formations over the target. Most of the attacks were not pressed closely, the majority being broken off about 800 yards away. However several 40th Group aircraft received some damage. Our claims totaled three destroyed, one probably destroyed and six damaged.

Antiaircraft fire over the target was meager and inaccurate.

Although weather was CAVU the smoke screen constituted an effective defense. The expectation that smoke screens will be encountered with ever increasing frequency will necessitate increased emphasis on off-set aiming points in target identification training.

Due to mechanical difficulties one plane bombed the secondary target, one the last resort target and one was forced to jettison.

B-29 #322, piloted by Capt ROBERT TISSERAT (44th Squadron) was forced to land at Ankang, China, with two engines out due to battle damage. (On 24 December when #322 was being flown out by Capt JOHN G. MARTIN, 45th Squadron, one engine was lost on take-off and another caught fire shortly afterward. Capt MARTIN brought the plane around but had to crash land short of the field, washing out the plane but with no injury to any of the crew.)

Aircraft #363, piloted by Capt GEORGE VAROFF, had one engine shot out by fighters over the target. The propeller could not be feathered and continued to windmill as the plane turned back.

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The Formation Commander immediately assigned two other planes to escort the cripple. Everything seemed to be all right until position 36 30'N – 113 00'E was reached t 0553Z. At this time #363 was seen to lower its landing gear and open the bomb bay doors. The altitude of the plane was 14,000 feet and the terrain below was rugged and mountainous with steep river gorges and sheer cliffs. Then Capt VAROFF called Major WEMPLE in #729, one of the escorting planes, and in an unruffled matter-of-fact voice stated that #1 propeller was getting ready to fly off and that they were abandoning the plane.

The crews of the escorting planes watched what they described as a "heart-breaking scene" as they saw the #1 prop fly off and saw the crew bailing out. Eleven chutes were seen to open but the observers reported that one chute was seen to collapse when the strong wind blew it against a sheer cliff. Number 363 was seen to crash into a mountain and explode.

Although reports have been fragmentary and inconclusive, latest information indicates that the entire crew, two of whom are injured, are walking their way out with the help of Chinese communists, though suffering from the sub-zero temperatures.

Back at Chakulia, on the 4th of the month, a complete inspection of the Base was instituted by the Air Inspector's Office, XX Bomber Command, under the direction of Lt Col McAULEY. This inspection covered all phases of base operation, including airplanes, equipment, records and Base facilities. The report made was very favorable and all concerned were commended for the improvement shown over the past 90 day period.

On the 5th, Lt Col HENRY P. (Chick) LUNA, Group Operations Officer, made B-29 history when, having lost an engine immediately after becoming airborne on a maximum load (134,500 lbs gross) take-off, he successfully brought his plane around to a safe landing. In view of the fact that several B-29's had previously been lost by groups of the XX Bomber Command due to engine failure on take-off, it was generally felt that loss of an engine at 50 feet altitude, 145 mph airspeed, 134,500 lbs gross weight (as was the case in this instance) would result in a crash. Col LUNA (who has 7000 hours of flying time) immediately radioed the good news, including details, to Col BLANCHARD in China for the information of all the crews who were there for the mission (Incl 1).

On 6 December Major WILLIAM B. CHALLMAN, Group Flight Surgeon, was relieved from duty by Special Order #299, XX Bomber Command, 6 Dec, and on the 9th he left for Uncle Sugar Able via ATC. With the deactivation of the 395th Bomb Squadron the Group was left with an extra Flight Surgeon and Major CHALLMAN chose to leave in order that one of the squadron Flight Surgeons might gain a promotion. Capt WILLIAM SEIFERT formerly of the 395th Squadron was designated Group Flight Surgeon.

On 13 December Lt Col John Seeley, Commanding Officer of the 40th Group Forward Area Detachment, was relieve and ordered back to India for further treatment of injuries received in a jeep accident during the Japanese raid on A-1 the night of 21 November. (Incl 2) He was replaced

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by Capt ROBERT P. HALEY and Capt R. A. RAGLAND took Capt HALEY's place as Operations Officer.

Also on the 13th, Field Order #20 was received from Headquarters XX Bomber Command. The target was to be the Rama VI Railroad Bridge at Bangkok, Thailand, and the mission was to be considered largely as a training flight for the more inexperienced crews.

Early in the morning of the 14th 12 planes took off from Chakulia Army Air Base carrying an average load of 12 x 1000 lb and 6 x 500 lb demolition bombs.

Due to engine trouble one plane was forced to bomb the target of last resort, a storage area at Bassein, Burma. The 11 remaining proceeded on to the primary target.

On arriving at Bangkok the railroad bridge was found to be obscured by cloud cover to such an extent that it was impossible to bomb visually. As there were neither fighters or flak in the area two bombing runs were made before it was decided to turn back and bomb the secondary target at Rangoon, the Central Railroad Station and Yards.

Weather was CAVU at Rangoon and an excellent bombing run was made at an altitude of 20000 feet.

Back at Chakulia the indication that something was wrong came when the "bombs away" message was received from Lt Col JAMES I. CORNETT (Commanding Officer 44th Squadron), the Formation Commander. The message (Incl 3) was somewhat garbled in transmission but conveyed the fact that several planes were missing and others were damaged and returning with wounded men on board. Only two planes returned to Chakulia that afternoon; four landed at Chittagong, one at Cox's Bazaar and four did not return.

"Bombs away" was at 0444Z (Photo 5). A few seconds later there was a tremendous explosion which literally blew the formation apart. One B-29, never definitely identified, was seen hurdling earthward, a mass of flame. No chutes were seen. Two others were not seen after the explosion. A fourth, #574 piloted by Capt ROBERT SHANKS (45th Squadron), was badly damaged, but at the insistence of Col CORNETT Capt SHANKS managed to fly #574 about 100 miles west of Rangoon. At that time he called the Formation Commander and stated that it was impossible to continue and that they were going to bail out. Due to the fact that the surviving planes became widely scattered #574 was not seen after leaving the target area so no one was able to observe the bail out.

Of the planes which returned, either directly to Chakulia or to Chittagong or Cox's Bazaar, all suffered varying degrees of shrapnel damage. Lt. H. E. SOULES (25th Squadron), the Navigator in the lead plane, flown by Major G. E. DOYLE, was killed by what was afterward determined to be a bomb fragment, and Sgt. G. W. MILLER (44th Squadron), Radar Operator in #685 was hit in the leg by a piece of shrapnel. Missing crews of the four planes which did not return are listed in 40th Group Special Orders No 283, dated 18 December 1944 (Incl 4).

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An investigation was made by Major J. M. BESEDA, Group Bombardier. It was definitely determined, from fragments found in the planes which returned, that a bomb, or bombs, had detonated just below the formation immediately after bombs away. The decision to load each plane with 500 lb bombs in addition to the 1000 pounders had been made only after considerable deliberation and study of the fall characteristics of each. In addition the commanding officers of the other three groups were consulted and asked their opinion of the dangers of carrying a mixed load. It was the opinion of each that there would be no particular danger, particularly if the nose fuses were removed from the 1000 lb bombs, as was done for this mission. (The actual range of the 1000 lb bomb being greater it was computed that the trajectories of the two bombs would cross 2000 to 3000 feet below the airplane.)

No enemy fighter attacks were encountered but several flak bursts were seen below and to the right of the formation just prior to "bombs away."

The Radio operator of the lead plane reported that he watched bombs falling from the planes behind and to the right and that after the bombs had fallen 200 to 300 feet he definitely saw a bomb explode among those dropped by either #457 (lead plane of "C" Flight – missing) or #726 (#2 in "C" flight – missing). He stated that the bombs were falling evenly and not wobbling or tumbling.

The explosion obviously occurred somewhere below these planes. The other two which did not return formed "D" flight on the right hand side of the formation.

Major BESEDA's conclusions were that the detonation of the bomb, or bombs, was caused by:

1. Bombs striking together in flight or
2. Defective fusing of bombs or
3. Bomb or bombs detonated by action of enemy anti-aircraft fire.

It is generally felt, however, that in view of all the evidence #1 is unlikely and #3 offers the most logical explanation. Number two remains a possibility of course that cannot be supported or disproved in any way.

Enclosed are photos showing Major DOYLE discussing the accident with Col BLANCHARD, Lt Col LUNA and Major L. E. SCHERCK (Group S-2) immediately after landing (Photo 6), and of Sgt MILLER being removed from #685 by Capt WILLIAM SEIFERT, Group Surgeon (Photo 7).

Bombing results, ironically, were excellent. The pattern was nearly perfect (Photos 8, 9), being only 1600 feet wide, and blanketed the railroad yard, almost totally destroying the station, cutting nearly all the tracks and severely damaging several loading platforms.

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By 40th Group Special Orders No 281, dated 14 December, Major JOSEPH E. WHITE was relieved from assignment to and duty with the 44th Bomb Squadron, reassigned to Group Headquarters and appointed Group Air Inspector. By the same order Capt JACK C. LEDFORD (45th Squadron) was placed on Special Duty with Group Headquarters as Assistant Group Operations Officer.

On 14 and 15 December a visiting team of instructors lead by Capt DeMERS conducted lectures and demonstrations on chemical warfare and incendiary bombs for all personnel in the Group. The subjects were handled exceptionally well and the demonstrations were highly impressive. Teaching with the fanaticism and persuasiveness invariably found in Chemical Warfare people they convinced a great many Group personnel that incendiaries are practically the only thing to drop from airplanes.

On 16 December a meeting of Headquarters Staff was called in Col LUNA's office at 1300 for the purpose of discussing the "Brookfield Mission." This was a test for the purpose of determining the mission length of time, from receipt of field order to take-off, which the Group would require to prepare for a tactical mission. Preparations were to be simulated so far as possible but had to be timed to the minute.

However, before the meeting had even gotten under way, Col BLANCHARD walked in with the information that the staff could forget about the Brookfield job; we were going to run a real one and the planes would have to take-off for A-1 on the following morning for a mission the day after that. So preparations were made in a minimum time – of necessity and not to determine whether it really could be done. In fact the field order was not received until that evening.

The next day (17 Dec) in accordance with Field Order #21, dated 15 December 1944, B-29's were dispatched to A-1, a total of 17 being assembled in China ready for the mission by that evening. Briefing was held that night and starting at 0639 China time the next morning (172329Z) 16 planes were airborne for an incendiary attack on the wharf and warehouse area at Hankow, China. One plane returned immediately with its full bomb load due to an inability to retract the landing gear. The remaining 15 proceeded on to the primary target.

This was to be a coordinated effort with the 14th Air Force, a tactical mission which would have an immediate effect on the enemy by the destruction of the immense stores of military equipment and supplies that are distributed from Hankow. P-51's and B-25's of the 14th were to work over the airfields in the area and the XX Bomber Command was to supply the Superforts to burn up the dock and warehouse area.

The 15 40th Group planes bombed the assigned target area from 19000 feet with a total of 1652 x M-47 and 39 x M-76 type incendiary bombs with excellent results as proved by post mission photos taken when the smoke had cleared away several days later. (Due to the great trail characteristic of the M-47 bombs; the strong headwind and the small detonation on impact; strike photos did not show the majority of the impacts.)

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Antiaircraft fire was meager and inaccurate and fighter opposition was weak.

It was clearly demonstrated on this mission that when M-47 type bombs are dropped from a formation, "C" flight must be above, instead of below, "A" flight. Crews in "C" flight stated that bombs were tumbling back over, under and on both sides of them.

All planes returned to A-1 with the last one in landing at 180641Z.

Before the planes had returned it was learned that another mission was to follow on the next day with still another, possibly, on the day after that. From here on it became a test of the endurance of both men and machines – a test, too, for the medics who had to see that the crews could keep wide awake while flying and get plenty of sleep between missions. Most of the Group Staff and ground personnel got less sleep than anyone else, during a mission they were preparing for the next one and between missions they were kept busy with interrogations, maintenance, bomb loading, briefing, etc, etc. In all, three missions were run in four days – a new record for the XX Bomber Command.

As soon as the crews had been interrogated on the Hankow mission they were fed and told to get as much sleep as possible before reporting back to the line late that night for the next briefing.

At 0230 China time the next morning (181930Z) a total of 12 planes were airborne for Omura, Japan, in accordance with XX Bomber Command Field Order #22. One airplane was a ground abort due to instrument failure prior to take-off.

Aircraft #466, flown by Capt CHESTER WOOLSEY (45th Squadron) began to lose oil in #1 engine not long after take-off. It was then found that the propeller would not feather. Due to excessive vibration from this engine the entire crew parachuted out about 25 miles northeast of Ankang, China. The plane crashed near by. Aside from minor bruises and sprains all of the crew were uninjured and returned to A-1 on the following day.

One plane joined a 462nd Group formation which proceeded to the primary target where, due to undercast, the Formation Commander decided to return to the secondary target. The Kianguan Docks at Shanghai were bombed visually from 20000 feet with excellent results confirmed by strike photos. Antiaircraft fire was meager and inaccurate and only weak fighter opposition was encountered.

One plane, unable to join any formation, proceeded on to the secondary target at Shanghai and bombed visually from 20000 feet with good observed results. (No strike photos obtained) No enemy opposition was encountered.

One plane, due to mechanical difficulties, bombed the last resort target, the wharf area at Nanking, with good observed results and encountered no opposition.

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A total of eight planes succeeded in reaching the primary target, the Omura Aircraft Plant, where 41 x 500 lb M-64 demolition and 45 x 500 lb M-76 incendiary bombs were released by radar – bombsight. The target was covered by 10/10 clouds and no visual observation of results was possible. (Reconn photos taken several days later showed no new damage to the plant.) Antiaircraft fire was meager and inaccurate and weak fighter opposition was encountered.

Numerous reports of enemy jamming of the command frequency were received and there was one report of a high altitude balloon at 22000 feet over Japan.

All planes, with the exception of #466, returned safely to A-1.

About 1730 CST that evening #6331 took off for India piloted by Major R. E. MOSS (45th Squadron). The flight was uneventful until a point just north of Chittagong (due to a faulty radio compass the plane had gotten south of course) was reached when the bombardier reported possible antiaircraft bursts some distance below. The IFF had been checked several times and according to the pilot and radar operator was operating. However, this equipment was again checked and found to be operating.

About five minutes later bullets began ripping through the fuselage and fire was seen to break out in the right inboard wing section. The crew all thought the plane had been attacked by an enemy night fighter. Major MOSS immediately gave the order to bail out.

All crew members, with the exception of the Navigator, Lt DAVID M. LUSTIG, landed on Dakhin Shahbacbar Island west of Chittagong. The Radio Operator T Sgt R. V. KLAVER, had been wounded by shell fragments, one of which was later found to have pierced a lung, but his injuries were not thought to be serious at that time. The passenger, Lt. J. T. DILLEHAY, suffered a broken ankle and the remainder of the crew were uninjured except for minor bruises and sprains. With the exception of the Navigator all were found the next day and flown to Calcutta in a PBY-5A. Lt LUSTIG had fallen in the water and drowned and his body was not found until it washed ashore several days later.

Back in Chakulia it was learned that #6331 had been shot down by a British Beaufighter. The pilot of this plane stated that his IFF had not been triggered by that of #6331 and in addition he had thought that the antiaircraft bursts were explosions of bombs dropped by the B-29 (which he had not recognized).

Going back to the evening of the 20th at A-1, China, a two ball alert was sounded about 2000 CST. Three B-29's took off for the rear area but only two arrived at Chakulia later that night.

Number 276, flown by Capt W. J. BALL (45th Squadron), took off on very short notice due to the alert. The 24 x 500 lb bombs which it had just ferried up to China had not been removed and gasoline in the bomb bay tanks had not been transferred to the wing tanks. However take-off

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was accomplished without incident.

As soon as the plane was settled on course transfer of fuel was attempted, but the system was found to be inoperative. When it became definite that transfer could not be accomplished, the Pilot ordered the bombs and all excess equipment jettisoned, and decided to make an emergency landing at Yunnanyi: since he had ample gas in the wing tanks to reach this field. However Yunnanyi could not be contacted by radio and upon arriving there the area was found to be completely overcast. It was then decided to attempt to reach Myitkyina in northern Burma. Shortly after #1 and #4 engines stopped from lack of gas the Radio Operator succeeded in contacting the station at Panagahr, but while requesting this station to relay his emergency message #2 engine started to cut out and Capt BALL gave the order to bail out.

The entire crew landed safely, with only the usual minor injuries, not far south of Laokai which lies on the Burma Road almost in the middle of the Hump. With the help of local Chinese they all made their way to Laokai and from there traveled to Yunnanyi on the Burma Road by weapon carrier. From Yunnanyi: By C-46, C-47 and truck, they returned to Chakulia Army Air Base via Mohanbari, Chabua, Dum Dum, Barackpore and Kharagpur.

Returning once more to China - - The attack on A-1 was made by only a single plane. A few small frags were dropped near the middle of the runway resulting only in small cavities which were filled in within an hour.

The last mission of the "triple header" began on the 21st when 13 B-29's were dispatched for an attack on the Manchuria Aircraft Plant at Mukden. Twelve planes were airborne beginning at 0330 CST (202030Z). One B-29 was a ground abort due to mechanical failure just before take-off.

Ten planes bombed the primary target with a total of 72 x 500 lb M-64 and 73 x 500 lb M-76 bombs from 22000 feet. Nine planes made up the 40th Group formation and one bombed with the 444th Group formation. One of the planes in the 40th formation had an accidental release and dropped its bombs three or four miles short of the target.

At Mukden the primary target, most of Mukden Arsenal adjacent to it on the west side and the greater part of the airfield extending south from the Aircraft Plant were all completely obscured by a very effective smoke screen so that despite CAVU weather it was necessary to resort to offset bombing. Visual observation was limited to seeing bombs enter the smoke and fires in the area after turning off the bomb run. Strike photos did not permit any assessment of damage due to the smoke screen but recon photos obtained several days later indicate that bombs from the 40th Group formation fell on the airfield south of the target. Once again frosting of glass in the nose section was a serious problem.

Fighter opposition was very heavy; the formation was under almost constant attack from

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shortly after leaving the IP until leaving the target area. Practically every type of enemy fighter was encountered from obsolete CLAUDES to the most modern NICK. Several instances of near ramming were reported. Whether they were intentional or can be attributed only to the eagerness with which attacks were pressed cannot be conclusively determined. It is believed, however, that the reinstallation of the two additional guns in the upper forward turret offers the only possible improvement in defense against these closely pressed frontal attacks. Attacks were mostly from the frontal quarter and in many instances were well coordinated. However all types of attacks were employed.

Antiaircraft fire was generally meager and ranged from accurate to inaccurate.

The smokescreen installations had been increased since the mission on 7 December and the screen was very effective.

Also, in addition to the smokescreen at Mukden there were reports of an excellent smokescreen at the Showa Steel Works at Anshan.

A high altitude balloon at 22000 feet over Anshan was reported.

The possibility of the employment of air to air rockets was reported. Air to air bombing was attempted as usual.

Returning planes were subjected to additional fighter attacks over occupied China.

One plane was forced to bomb a target of opportunity (with poor observed results) when the fuel transfer system was found to be inoperative and the last resort target could not be found because of haze.

One plane jettisoned when it became necessary to feather #4 engine.

Aircraft #404 was hit by a 20 mm shell while on the bomb run and blew the left blister. However it was well protected by planes of the 444th Group and nursed safely back to base.

A total of seven enemy planes destroyed and seven damaged was claimed by returning crews.

All planes returned safely to A-1, the last one landing at 1625 CST (210925Z).

The majority of the planes returned to Chakulia Army Air Base on the following day to the relief of everyone concerned. Three missions in four days was considered a very rugged proposition indeed.

On the night of 24 December Capt HALEY and Capt RAGLAND were killed when there L-5 crashed near A-1. Bad weather with poor visibility was the responsible factor for this accident.

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News of the fatal crash reached Chakulia early Christmas morning and came as a shock to the numerous friends of these men back in India.

On Christmas Day everyone was given the day off with the exception of a few unhappy individuals who were required to keep certain offices open. The usual celebrations had taken place the night before and a great many people were in no condition to exert themselves anyhow. The day passed quietly (Photo 10, 11), and large and varied repasts were served at all the mess halls. In the afternoon the 40th Group flew a short and unofficial propaganda bombing mission to the other bases of the XX Bomber Command. The three L-5's participating were flown by Commanding Officer, Col WILLIAM H. BLANCHARD; the Deputy Commander, Lt Col H. R. SULLIVAN; and the Group S-3, Lt Col HENRY P. LUNA. The bombardiers, who scattered mimeographed Christmas greetings on Command Headquarters and the other three groups, were Capt W. E. DRISLANE, group S-4; Capt WILLIAM HELDT, Group Engineering Section; and Capt BATHOLOMEW ADLER, Group Chaplain. The only encounters reported were with low flying buzzards. All of our planes returned safely.

On the evening of the 25th, during the repeat performance of a local talent variety show directed by the Red Cross girls, a Yellow alert was sounded. The "Cactus Bowl" was emptied in something less than a minute and all personnel dispersed to slit trenches bearing their gas masks and helmets. The sirens sounded the Red alert within half an hour. One enemy bomber approached Chakulia but evidently did not come over the field. However tracers and flak explosions could be seen just over the horizon in the direction of the 468th Group at Salua where, it was learned the next day, small two pound incendiaries set fire to a couple of bashas and injured four men. The alert lasted for more than two hours but no bombs were dropped at this Base.

On 26 December Major ROBERT MOSS (45th Squadron) was ordered to A-1 to take command of the 40th Group Forward Echelon Detachment (Incl 5).

From the 26th to the 30th classes in Naval recognition and Reporting were conducted for all combat crews by Ensign CHARLES J. TORIN, USNR. Ensign TOBIN's methods of instruction were excellent and the classes were considered practically painless by the crews. A record 1665 man hours of instruction were conducted by this officer in five days.

By 40th Group Special Orders no 287, dated 27 December 1944 (Incl 6), 30 officers and enlisted men were placed on Detached Service with the XX Bomber Command Forward Echelon Detachment for duty with the Photo Recon Detachment.

By 40th Group Special Orders No 289, dated 30 December 1944 (Incl 7), Major MOSS was relieved from assignment to and duty with the 45th Squadron and reassigned to Group Headquarters (as Commanding Officer of the Forward Echelon Detachment).

By 40th Group Special Orders No 290, dated 31 December 1944 (Incl 8), Capt JOHN N.

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SANDERS was relieved from assignment with the 25th Bomb Squadron and reassigned to Group Headquarters. By this same order he was placed on Detached Service with the Forward Echelon Detachment as Operations Officer.

On 31 December B-29 #225 crashed in the hills just south of A-1 in China killing the Pilot, Capt DORSEY B. THOMAS, who was the only occupant at the time of the crash, and resulting in the death of the Co-pilot, 1st Lt ROBERT H. FITZPATRICK (both officers of the 25th Squadron) whose parachute evidently failed to open when he left the plane shortly before it struck the earth.

Number 225 had taken off early that morning on a photo reconnaissance mission for the Photo Recon Detachment at A-1. About two and a half hours out, at 31,000 feet, it was decided to turn back. A short time after this #3 engine presumably swallowed a valve and had to be feathered. The plane continued back without further incident until the field was reached at which time #2 engine caught on fire. The crew was ordered to bail out and did so from between 5000 and 3000 feet, all landing safely near A-1. Capt THOMAS evidently decided to attempt to bring the plane in despite poor visibility which may have been the determining factor in his failure to land safely.

During December the training program increased still further in size and scope. The number of man hours of ground training was 10214 – almost triple that of the preceding month – and the following subjects were covered:

Target Identification	Radar Bombing
Orientation	Navigation
Tactical Doctrine	Theory of Flight (#1 and #2)
Ditching	Radar Navigational Aids
Aircraft Recognition	Cruise Control
B-29 Facilities	Bombardier-Radar Procedure
IFF	Operation Procedure
Bomb Handling	Radar Operation
Evasive and Escape	Liaison Set
E6B Computer	Radio Compass
Flight Engineers Manual	Localizer
Radio Operation	Weather
Blinker	Formation Bombing Tactics
Code	Movie – Military Justice
XX BC Memo 50-1	C-1 Auto-Pilot
Radar Mechanics	Naval Recognition
Norden Bombsight	Navigation Maps and the Compass
First Aid	Marker Beacon and Interphone
Theory of Bombing	Safety
Fluxgate Compass	Signal and Aids to Navigators
Maps and Charts	Dead Reckoning
Radar Apt. Test	Movie – Next to Kin
Movie – Sabotage	Codes and Ciphers
ABC Computer	Command Set

Synthetic trainers put into operation in December were the Link Trainer (86 man hours), 7-A3 Bomb Trainer (158:55 man hours), Gunnery Trainer (1464 man hours), and Loran Trainer

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(408 man hours).

Particular emphasis was placed on the following subjects:

1. Lead Crew Training, Air and Ground – All Phases.
2. Target Identification.
3. Radar – Bombardier Procedure.
4. Cruise Control.
5. Tactical Doctrine.
6. Emergency Procedures.
7. Replacement Crew Training.

The above subjects were stressed not only in order to comply with AAF Training Standards but also in order to cope with the tactical trend, stiffening Japanese defense – both active and passive, length of missions, weather conditions over targets, etc, etc.

Most of the problems encountered were minor ones – crew attendance at classes and, linked with that, the coordination of ground and air training with combat missions. Due to the latter factor it was very difficult, if not impossible, to see that all personnel received perfectly uniform training, and one reason for this was, as pointed out by visiting inspectors, the lack of charts. Although attendance records were kept, the Group Schools Office lacked sufficient clerical personnel to keep numerous charts up to date. As a start in the right direction a suggestion to Bomber Command recommended a uniform chart and record system so that all groups would be required to keep the same charts and a fair estimate of training conducted could be made by a visual examination of these records.

Approximately 80% of combat crew personnel were attending classes. The remaining 20% could for the most part be accounted for as on a mission, preparing for a mission, on pass or acting as instructors.

During December a model lead crew was on the field for the purpose of instructing classes having to do primarily with the use of radar. These men had flown in the E.T.O. and had just completed the radar course at Langley Field. They contributed a great deal to the training program.

The Engineering Section received some such needed equipment during the month. With the new Third Echelon Propeller Department, jobs that formerly required days due to delays between here and higher depots can now be accomplished in a few hours. And with the acquisition of a heat treating oven, cell structural repairs can now be made on the base without the necessity for sending airplanes and personnel to the 22nd Air Depot.

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The seven planes that returned from the ill-fated mission to Rangoon on 14 December were damaged to such an extent that an estimated 18000 man hours would be required for repairs.

During December all center wing tank airplanes were completely modified to combat status. This required installing short cowl flaps in 11 planes and replacing 33 unmodified engines.

A complete check was made on the defrosting systems in the B-29's, and several ideas were tried out. It was found that the system of ducts now installed in late model planes was the most satisfactory, but the Engineering Section believes that a blower system of some type is still needed to increase the rate of flow across the windows.

A total of 16 B-29's were gained by the Group and one F-13 was temporarily attached. However 14 planes were lost during the month. Five of these were flown back to the States by ATC crews and the remainder are all accounted for in this narrative.

At the end of the month, of 38 planes 29 were in commission and nine were out of commission.

On the whole, morale could be considered good during the month of December. Living conditions at Chakulia Army Air Base had never been better – in fact so great was the difference between present conditions and those when the Group had first arrived that anyone who had not suffered the rigors of the “Old Area” and eaten at the “Gag and Vomit” was considered the merest recruit. In addition numerous three day passes were given for trips to Calcutta and Jamshedpur, and the weather during the month was very nearly perfect with warm days, cloudless skies and cool – almost cold – nights.

However with the passing of time the combat crews were beginning to grow more and more concerned over the matter of replacements. Despite numerous rumors no official rotation policy had yet been announced. The crews wanted at least a goal which they could anticipate. As it was they could look forward only to an indefinite and seemingly interminable number of missions with their chances of going home safely constantly diminishing.

If it should be argued that with only 12 missions (the most that any crew could claim at the end of the year) and only seven months of combat operations it was too soon to become greatly concerned with rotation, the combat crew personnel could point out that they had combat tested a new and untried airplane, that the majority of their missions were far longer than those run by any other air force, that their flying time over enemy territory was far greater than that of crews in any other theater, and that each mission run from the forward area necessitated, aside from the mission itself, 2600 miles round trip over some of the most rugged terrain in the world.

However the important thing was a goal to aim for – either a definite number of missions or combat hours.

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Enclosed with this installment of the History are numerous photographs of general interest. All are completely identified on the backs of the prints (Photos 12 thru 22).

Also enclosed are five General Orders listing the men to whom awards were made during the month. (Incls 9 thru 13)

F. G. WOOD JR
Captain, Air Corps
Historical Officer

SECRET

Incl 1

COPY

**FROM LUNA AT CHAKULIA 020506Z
TO SEELY, BLANCHARD AND RENFRO AT HSINCHING**

C O N F I D E N T I A L

FAILURE OF MASTER ROD AND FIRE ON NUMBER TWO ENGINE ON TAKE OFF CMA AIRSPEED ONE FOUR FIVE CMA FIFTY FEET ALTITUDE CMA FLAPS BEING RETRACTED PD COMPLETE LOSS OF POWER WITH MANIFOLD PRESSURE ATMOSPHERIC AT TWO NINE INCHES FIRE EXTINGUISHED WHEN PROP FEATHERED WITHOUT USE OF CHARLIE OBCE TWO CYLINDER PD ABLE TO MAINTAIN ONE SIX ZERO XX AIRPSPEED WITH TAKE OFF POWER WITHOUT SALVOING BOMBS BUT UNABLE TO CLIMB PD SALVOED BOMBS AND FUEL TANK AND WAS ABLE TO CLIMB TO TWO HUNDRED FEET AND REDUCE THE RATED POWER TO ONE SIX ZERO AIRSPEED PD NORMAL LANDING PD TELL CREWS GOOD NEWS IF SALVO COMPLETED PD EVEN CHANCE TO MAKE IT TOMORROW.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

BT 020720Z

COPY

Incl 3

AIRCRAFT CONTROL

FROM 508 0600Z

**TARGET SECOND BOMBED VISUAL 11 PLANES UNOBSERVED 0444 PLANE 831 726 457
MISSING DAMAGED AND IN FORMATION RETURNING CHT 508 407 729 589, 587 BAILED
OUT 100 MILES WEST OF TARGE, 574 REPORTED 3 INJURED /INCLUDING 225 LEFT
FORMATION UNABLE TO CONTACT APPARENTLY OK PRESENT POSITION 19' 13" 93'
00" SIGNED CORNETT TROUBLE PLENTY**

0731Z