

(Retyped from microfilm by Sparky Corradina)

CONFIDENTIAL

**HEADQUARTERS
40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (VH)
Army Air Field, Pratt, Kansas**

7 February 1944

GROUP HISTORY

1 Jan 1944 to 31 Jan 1944

Organization

There were no changes in the duties and functions of the 40th Group, nor did any units leave this station during January. However the 1st and 3rd Maintenance Squadrons received Port Call on 24 January and are due to leave early in February. The 2nd and 4th Maintenance Squadrons are due to follow despite the fact that they were the first ones alerted. This has caused somewhat of a problem because they had been relieved of all maintenance duties and had to keep busy with a special training program on their own.

The Group Commander has issued an order that no leaves or furloughs (emergencies excepted) would be granted personnel of the 17th to 20th Maintenance Squadrons because it is considered necessary that all officers and men remain on duty until the 40th Group squadrons have left.

Personnel

During January approximately 1200 enlisted men were assigned to the Group as filler personnel, but the majority of these (about 75%) were reassigned to the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Maintenance Squadrons which are attached to the 40th Group for administration, duty, rations and quarters.

The actual strength of Group as of 31 January was 434 officers (442 authorized) and 1916 enlisted men (1855 authorized) with 35 enroute to join.

The only shortage is in Central Fire Control maintenance men which has resulted, of course, in certain maintenance problems. These do not particularly effect the efficiency of the Group at present because there is a corresponding shortage of B-29 aircraft. Manning Maintenance Squadrons to full authorized strength has constituted the principle personnel problem.

Improper classification is being kept at a minimum; approximately 60 men were reclassified during January.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

GROUP HISTORY, 1 Jan 1944 to 31 Jan 1944, 40th Bomb Gp (VH), AAF, Pratt, Kansas, dtd 7 Feb 1944

The only changes of key personnel this month were the four Bombardment Squadrons; all Operations Officers were replaced by men who were not Airplane Commanders. It evidently was decided by higher headquarters that an Airplane Commander has enough responsibilities without being burdened with the duties of Operations, and that Operations is sufficiently important to warrant the appointment of an officer who is not responsible for a combat crew.

Supply and Equipment

By far the most serious equipment shortage is of B-29 airplanes. At the end of January only six B-29's and one YB-29 were assigned to the Group – an increase of one B-29 over the preceding month. This is not encouraging considering the fact that the end of our training period at this Base is almost within view. Nothing definite could be learned regarding the prospect of obtaining additional B-29's in the near future. Modification centers appear to constitute the principle bottleneck. (See also under Morale)

A shortage of a working stock of certain Air Corps items in the Sub Depot was made the subject of a special report to higher headquarters, and action was taken has resulted in some elimination of the shortage.

The lack of spare parts for grounded airplanes, and the time required to obtain these parts, adversely affects unit training programs due to the loss of potential flying hours. This condition is ever present to a greater or less extent though every effort is made to alleviate it.

There were no changes in supply procedure and no instances of outstanding speed and efficiency in correcting supply or maintenance problems.

Maintenance

During the month the major trouble on the B-29 airplanes was engine failures. A total of fourteen engines were changed for the following reasons: 8 were changed because an exhaust valve failed. The valve head would come off breaking a hole in the piston resulting in the engine filling up with metal filings; on three occasions a gear tooth was found on the front magnetic plug during regular inspection. In each case it was necessary to change the engine; on one occasion the thrust bearing failed, and on another the impeller failed.

The valve tappet and ignition modifications were completed on four engines and fixed cowl flap modification was begun.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

GROUP HISTORY, 1 Jan 1944 to 31 Jan 1944, 40th Bomb Gp (VH), AAF, Pratt, Kansas, dtd 7 Feb 1944

Training

In addition to routine Group and squadron flying training, consisting primarily of formation and practice bombing flights, individual squadrons represented the 40th Group on three 58th Wing missions during January. On each of these missions the Group was to furnish nine B-17F's (in actuality from six to eight were gotten into the air); industrial targets were camera bombed and practice bombs were dropped on a bombing range. Missions were from five and a half to six and a half hours duration.

In compliance with 58th Wing Training Field Orders four B-29 fighter attack missions were flown during January in addition to locally scheduled flights. Data on these missions is classified secret and for security reasons will not be included here. It may be said however that the principle problem encountered with the B-29 had to do with maintenance and mechanical difficulties which resulted in the "scrubbing" of various scheduled missions due to lack of aircraft.

Ground training during January consisted primarily of make-up classes for crew members who were late arrivals, and also for those who had missed certain phases of training for various reasons.

A group of camouflage instructors arrived and conducted instruction in that subject. This instruction was not considered satisfactory due chiefly to the fact that quality of training was not good and also that instruction was hurried due to lack of time. It is believed that camouflage instruction could be greatly improved by simulating actual conditions in the field. In other words it is recommended that units be bivouacked in the field for a short period of time.

Approximately 75% of the combat crew personnel received instruction and completed required firing with the .45 pistol. A high tower range was placed in operation. Aircraft gunners received instruction and firing practice with turrets mounted in a E-5 trainer. This is very popular with crew members and is considered excellent training for gunners. Radar training was stressed during the period covered by this report and personnel were trained both as individuals and as a entire crews with increasing emphasis on crews as units.

Training accomplished was approximately that of the scheduled program except for the usual absenteeism. Factors that delayed training were mainly the large number of absentees due to colds and other respiratory diseases prevalent in Kansas during this time of year.

Greater emphasis was placed on the flying training over the ground training program.

CONFIDENTIAL

GROUP HISTORY, 1 Jan 1944 to 31 Jan 1944, 40th Bomb Gp (VH), AAF, Pratt, Kansas, dtd 7 Feb 1944

During January Group airplanes accumulated a total of 3,292.4 flying hours.

Facilities

The erection of numerous hutments at the north end of the Field has eased the housing problem considerably, although the gymnasium continued to be used as a barracks for the greater part of the month. The anticipated (and long delayed) movement of the maintenance squadrons in February is expected to alleviate the situation to the point where it is no longer a problem.

Morale

In general, morale in the 40th Group may be said to be high at present. All personnel are kept busy (a little too busy in some instances), the combat crews are learning to work together, and as training approaches completion a greater sense of squadron and group unity is begging to make itself felt.

However the large picture is not so bright. In addition to the various factors mentioned in previous installments of the History are (1) the policy that no leaves or furloughs (except in emergencies) could be anticipated before overseas movement and (2) the doubt arising in the minds of some of the combat crew personnel that, due to lack of B-29 airplanes, they will be properly trained for combat when they arrive at the theater of operations.

This last is extremely important and stems directly from the fact that the Group does not and has not had an adequate number of B-29 airplanes. Although several indications point to overseas movement within a comparatively short time there are gunners who have never fired the guns in a B-29 and co-pilots who have not even taxied the airplane.

Another morale factor worthy of note concerns the mechanical difficulties being encountered with the B-29. For example, during January the 44th Squadron had ten long range B-29 missions scheduled. Three airplanes got off the ground and only one completed its mission. Time in the air was 11 hours and 20 minutes. On landing, the ship was found to require an engine change.

During January there were 20 court-martials in the Group. The majority of these were for AWOL's in the alerted maintenance squadrons. This apparently is a manifestation of the disease

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

GROUP HISTORY, 1 Jan 1944 to 31 Jan 1944, 40th Bomb Gp (VH), AAF, Pratt, Kansas, dtd 7 Feb 1944

known as gangplankitis which sometimes affects as many as 23% of the personnel in the alerted unit. There is no known preventative and the cure is involuntary and decidedly unpleasant.

**F. G. WOOD JR.
Capt, Air Corps
Historical Officer**

CONFIDENTIAL