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HEADQUARTERS FORWARD ECHELON DETACHMENT
40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
Office of the Historical Officer

APO #631
12 Feb 45

Detachment History

1 January 1945 to 31 January 1945

The New Year found the Detachment continuing to give assistance to the new B -29 Photo Squadron which had arrived in December. Daily reconnaissance missions to JAPAN continued up to the fourth of January. However, on New Year's Day a special supper, featuring canned turkey, was arranged for the Enlisted Men and Mr. Wilson P. Chen gave a "Gombai" party for the Officers of the Detachment that evening in his quarters. Mr. Chen is the manager of the hostel at which the Detachment lived and is an employee of the Chinese Nationalist Government. Many delicious courses of food were served and many toasts were given to CHINA, General and Madame Chiang-Kai-Shek, and to the UNITED STATES. Following each toast "Gombai" was announced and according to the Chinese custom all who are drinking must drink to the bottom of their glasses, Yuna wine, manufactured and bottled in YUNNAN PROVINCE, was the drink of the evening.

On the fourth of the month, the Group's B -29's from the Rear Area commenced arriving for a double strike. Missions were run on the sixth against the aircraft plant at OMURA, JAPAN and on the ninth against the harbor at KEELUNG in FORMOSA. An unusual departure from the routine was the return of the airplanes from the KEELUNG Mission to LULIANG, near KUNMING, instead of to A-1 and then from LULIANG to CHAKULIA. This was necessitated by a shortage of gasoline at A-1 caused by the bad terminal flying weather. In another coordinated attack in connection with the LUZON landings, the Group's B-29's started arriving at A -1 on the twelfth with eight arriving on the next day and sixteen on the next day. The first target was the airfield at KAGI on FORMOSA which mission was completed on the fourteenth and then on the seventeenth, a mission against the airfield at SHINCHIKU, also on FORMOSA. In the interim, a photo mission was run on the fifteenth to FORMOSA by Captain CHESTER A WOOLEY and crew in aircraft #795 and a critique had of the first mission. On the eighteenth, the airplanes started returning to the Rear Area.

On the twentieth of the month a warning order for an evacuation from the Forward Area to the Rear Area was received and on the twenty -second, a message was received setting "E" day for

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the twenty-third. By virtue of the warning order packing of equipment commenced immediately in accordance with the Evacuation Plan previously setup in the latter part of 1944. On the morning of the twenty-second, a meeting of all personnel of the Detachment was had in the War Room on the line, at which time the security of the movement was discussed and warning given for the men to prepare for the move. On the morning of the twenty-third, another meeting was had of all personnel and the names announced of those to leave that afternoon in B-29 aircraft #757 to be piloted by Captain SANDERS the Detachment Operations Officer. That airplane had been at the Field undergoing repairs since the first mission of the month. Also at the meeting, names of the men to assist in loading were announced together with certain Enlisted Men in the Communications Section who were to stay to operate the air-ground radio station for the Photo Squadron which was remaining. On the morning and early afternoon of the twenty-third, a C-46 and B-29 aircraft #757 were loaded with equipment, the latter carrying seven of the Detachment personnel, and both planes took off that afternoon for the Rear Area. On the twenty-fourth, four of the Group's B-29's were loaded with personnel and equipment and returned to the Rear Area. On the twenty-fifth, two planes took off and the same was true on the twenty-sixth. Lt CLARK in B-29 aircraft #729 on the twenty-seventh carried out the remaining personnel and equipment. To complete the evacuation, ten B-29's and one C-46 were used and for an average trip, fifteen to seventeen passengers were carried by the B-29's. Total weight carried including weight of passengers was approximately thirty-five tons. The evacuation was orderly and quickly completed due to hard work and excellent cooperation. Much equipment including the air ground station and all transportation was left behind for the use of the Photo Squadron. Besides maintaining the ten B-29's used to evacuate the Detachment, the Engineering Section assisted in the maintaining of numerous B-29's sent from all groups to evacuate the Forward Echelon Detachment of the XX Bomber Command at A-1.

Upon landing at the Rear Area, the B-29's were met and the personnel of the Forward Area were assigned to the various Squadrons and some to Headquarters of the Group. Meetings, of all the personnel of the Forward Area, were held on the mornings of the twenty-seventh and the thirtieth at which time security of the planned movement was again discussed and also the granting of three day passes. A detachment party is planned after the return of the personnel from pass in the early part of February.

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The strength of the Detachment on the first of January was one hundred and forty-six Enlisted Men and ten Officers and on the twenty-second, the day before the evacuation started, one hundred and forty-seven Enlisted Men and ten Officers. The Detachment Engineering Officer, ELLIOTT GOLDWATER, and Intelligence Officer, BRUCE L MILLER, were promoted to the rank of Captain effective the fifteenth. On the twenty-fourth, eighteen of the Enlisted Men were promoted, their names being underlined in Special Order Number 16, of Headquarters, 40th Bombardment Group of same date which is attached. Five Enlisted Men in the Communication Section have remained in the Forward Area to assist with the running of the air ground station but will return to the Rear Area with the Photo Squadron. Captain JOHN N SANDERS from the 25th Bombardment Squadron arrived on the fourth to become the Detachment Operations Officer.

The weather continued cold, cloudy and damp but, notwithstanding, the morale of the Detachment continued excellent up to the return to India and many expressed themselves as to their regret in leaving CHINA.

BRUCE L MILLER
Captain, Air Corps
Historical Officer