

(Retyped from microfilm by Sparky Corradina)

Secret

**HEADQUARTERS
40th Bombardment Group
APO 631, Postmaster, New York, N.Y.**

15 July 1944

HISTORY 1 May thru 31 May 1944

May was a month of cargo flights and practice missions. Hump flights began on 3 May when three 40th Group B-29's took off from Chakulia and landed at A-1 in China to off-load gasoline and oil. This was the beginning of a "bank" in which fuel and oil would be deposited until a sufficient amount was available for a combat mission.

On 4 May, by 40th Group General Orders Number 4, of that date (Incl 1), each Bomb Squadron and its respective Maintenance Squadron were combined and redesignated with the Bomb Squadron designation (for example the 25th Bomb Squadron and 1st Bomb Maintenance Squadron became the 25th Bomb Squadron). This change made little if any difference other than from an administrative standpoint. In each instance the Maintenance Squadron Commanding Officer became the Executive Officer of the Bomb Squadron.

Early in the month work was begun (on orders from higher headquarters) converting one B-29 to a "tanker." This was in the nature of an experiment to determine whether or not addition conversions would be warranted. B-29 #42-6254 was designated as the guinea pig; converting it necessitated the removal of about 25% of the radar equipment, all turrets except the tail turret, armor plate, gunsights and all CFC equipment. One additional tank was then installed in the rear bomb bay giving the airplane a total of four bomb bay tanks and a gas capacity of approximately 8050 gallons.

Each "combat" B-29 was also equipped with an extra bomb bay tank so that the gas capacity of the two types was the same. It was anticipated that the off-loading capabilities of the tanker would be greater, however, due to its cleaner lines which would result in lower fuel consumption. This proved to be the case.

During May #254 made only two round trips to the forward area so the results could not be considered absolutely conclusive. Nevertheless, this plane with a gross weight in excess of the average for non-converted cargo planes, consumed more

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Than 700 gallons less than the average for cargo runs. The fact stands that #254 off-loaded 2,410 gallons of fuel per trip in addition to an average of 100 gallons of oil and 3,290 pounds of dry cargo (chiefly 50 caliber ammunition). This was with the four bomb bay tanks and without the installation of additional storage tanks as was contemplated. Judging from these figures one tanker could average 2¼ gallons consumed in flight for every gallon delivered, in contrast to the 7 gallons consumed by each "combat" B-29 for every gallon delivered.

At the end of the month it was learned that four additional planes were to be converted to tankers.

On 11 May Captain Ernest Turner of the 395th Squadron flying #42-6342, landed at Chakulia. This was the last plane to arrive from the States. The Group at this time again had 37 B-29's. One had been lost at Cairo but #331, which was flown over by Colonel HARMAN and had not formerly been assigned to the Group, brought the total to 37.

On 12 May, by Chakulia Army Air Base General Orders Number 5, of that date (Incl 2), Colonel L. F. HARMON (40th Group Commander) assumed control of the Base, and Lt Col WILFORD F. DOUGLAS (28th Service Group Commander) and Lt Col JOHN W. HOPE (40th Group Executive Officer) were designated Deputy Base Commander and Base Executive respectively.

With the temporary suspension of Hump cargo missions on 25 May the Group Statistical Section prepared an analysis of 74 missions accomplished up to that date.

It was found that of the total of 74 completed round trips by the entire Group, the 45th Squadron ranked highest with 26 to its credit. The 45th had also delivered 43.7% of all cargo transported to A-1. This included 26,170 gallons of gasoline and 24,035 pounds of freight, half again as much in each case as the next highest squadron.

During the month two 40th Group planes completed six cargo missions, three planes completed four, sixteen planes completed three, 13 planes completed two, and eight planes completed one. Due to maintenance and spare parts problems five planes had not yet completed one mission.

The average gross weight at take-off for all transport missions to date was

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131,809 pounds. However the weight varied from as much as 137,371 pounds to a minimum of 127,853 pounds, a difference of almost 10,000 pounds. More than half of the take-offs were at gross weights between 131,500 and 132,500 pounds.

During May an average of 61:37 man hours per day of maintenance were performed on each airplane. On 13 May the average percentage of hours aircraft were out of commission was 34%, but on 24 May the percentage was 50%. This could, in part at least, be attributed to the fact that an increasing number of planes were awaiting parts.

Radar practice bombing using the new ANAPQ-13 set constituted the most important training accomplished during May. From 15 May to 25 May aircraft completed successful missions, the target being Halliday Island which lies a few miles off the coast of India in the Bay of Bengal to the south of Chakulia. A total of 296 bomb runs were made with 248 bombs being dropped individually using the ANAPQ-13 apparatus. The average true altitude above the target was 21,500 feet and the average ground speed 256 statute miles. The results astonished everyone with the possible exception of Captain WILLIAM M. HILT, Group Radar Officer. The average circular error was only 54 mils.

Although this error is considerably greater than that to be expected using a bombsight the following facts should be taken into consideration. Twenty-nine of these radar sets had been installed in the planes before leaving Pratt, Kansas, by men who had no previous experience with installations of this type. The radar personnel of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th maintenance Squadrons had never seen an APQ-13 set prior to their arrival (and the arrival of the B-29's) at Chakulia and had no training in the repair and maintenance of this equipment. Several modifications had been made prior to the practice bombing.

Most important of all perhaps, not one of the radar operators had ever dropped a bomb before by any means. These results were, therefore, all the more impressive, and served to dissipate most of the doubts anyone may have had concerning the prospective employment of the APQ-13 in combat missions. So much so, in fact, that for a while the Group Bombardiers were needled with taunts that they would probably be reclassified as Mess Officers.

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An epidemic of front collector ring failures constituted the major engineering problem during May, resulting in many cylinder and a few engine changes. The trouble was that the metal would crack and burn through at the ball socket joint next to the cylinder. If this condition was not discovered in its early stages the burning continued until there was a complete severance. Then the hot exhaust gases passed back over the cylinder heads, burning them through. With no new collector rings available it was a battle with welding rod and torch to keep as many of the damaged ones serviceable as possible.

May, then, was a month of intense activity for the 40th Group. It was also a month of searing, disabling heat. The highest officially recorded temperature was 113 degrees F and the average for the entire month was 94 degrees F. It should be noted that these figures were recorded by the weather station under "deep shade" conditions. An unofficial estimate volunteered by Weather placed maximum temperature on the runway at 130 degrees F and even higher inside the planes. Of greater importance than the exact temperature to maintenance crews was the fact that during the day metal became too hot to touch. Maintenance work could only be accomplished during early morning hours and at night.

With prickly heat on their backs, and little if any ice in their drinks, perspiration cascading from their brows, the men of the 40th toiled on buoyed up by the hope of combat missions soon to come.

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

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**CHAKULIA ARMY AIR BASE
APO #631**

**GENERAL ORDER)
:
NUMBER 5....)**

**RRH/ek/C
12 May 1944**

**ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND.....I
ANNOUNCEMENT OF STAFF.....II**

ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND

I – In compliance with VCG XX bomber Command, 11 May 1944 and in accordance with AR 600-20 THE UNDERSIGNED ASSUMES COMMAND OF Chakulia Army Air Base, APO #631.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF STAFF

II – The following officers are designated staff officers as indicated, for the undersigned, in addition to their other duties.

Lt. Col WILFORD F. DOUGLAS 0334982 Deputy Base Commander

Lt. Col JOHN W. HOPE 0310583 Executive

**L. F. HARMAN
Colonel, Air Corps
Commanding**

Incl. 2

HEADQUARTERS 40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO # 631

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 4)

RRH/rh/C
4 May 1944

1. Pursuant to authority contained in PX WG 2286, 58th Bomb Wg, 3 May 44, the following units of this command are combined and redesignated as follows:

<u>Old Designation</u>	<u>New Designation</u>	<u>T/O</u>	<u>Strength</u>
25 th Bomb Squadron (VH) and 1 st Bomb Maintenance Sq	25 th Bomb Sq (VH)	Tentative	114 O's 456 EM
44 th Bomb Squadron (VH) and 2 nd Bomb Maintenance Sq	44 th Bomb Sq (VH)	Tentative	114 O's 456 EM
45 th Bomb Squadron (VH) and 3 rd Bomb Maintenance Sq	45 th Bomb Sq (VH)	Tentative	114 O's 456 EM
395 th Bomb Squadron (VH) and 4 th Bomb Maintenance Sq	395 th Bomb Sq (VH)	Tentative	114 O's 456 EM

By order of Colonel HARMAN:

R.R. HOLMAN,
1ST Lt., AC,
Adj.

OFFICIAL:

R.R. HOLMAN
1ST Lt., AC,
Adj.