

334th AIRDROME SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

334th Airdrome Squadron

STATIONS

Iliocos, Philippines

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 334th Airdrome Squadron was activated 1 May 44 by General Order 20 Headquarters 3rd Air Force, Drew Field, Tampa, Florida. There were 7 officers and 180 enlisted men authorized.

The Unit was formed largely from elements of the 76th Tac Recon Group which was moved from Thermal, California to Drane Air Base, Lakeland, Florida. The mission of the Squadron was to

support the 3rd Fighter Squadron by furnishing housing, mess facilities, engineering maintenance and ordinance and armament support.

The Staff Officers assigned were:

Captain Harmon V. Howe — Commanding Officer

1st Lieutenant Henry Kuhlman — Supply

1st Lieutenant Edson L. White — Communications

2nd Lieutenant Eugene Stisser — Engineering

1st Lieutenant Edwin Shea — Ordinance

1st Lieutenant William Wyte — Medical Officer

The months of June and July were spent on intensive training in all phases from avionics to line support of the 3rd Fighter Squadron. Personnel changes among the enlisted men were effected to form the best possible working team, since the Unit was scheduled for overseas assignment. The highest priority was given the Unit to pick the best specialist available within the 3rd Air Force. Particular attention was given to mess and engineering personnel.

On 18 Aug 44 the unit moved, together with the 3rd Air Commando Group to Alachua AAB at Gainesville, Florida in a simulated Air Commando operation. For two months the 334th supported the 3rd Fighter, fed the Group Headquarters as well and generally honed the skills necessary to perform its mission. During this period, a "takeover" of the airfield at Keystone Heights, near Gainesville, was accomplished. This was the Unit's first exercise in taking over and completely staffing the control tower, the bomb dump and all other facilities of an enemy airfield. All went well.

In late September 1944 the 334th boarded a train at Drew AFB and three days later arrived at Camp Stoneman, California for preparations to an overseas movement. On 6 Nov 44 the 334th boarded the USS General Hersey at the port of San Francisco for the long sea trip to the South Pacific. The Hersey proceeded alone under blackout conditions for 21 days before arriving at Hollandia, New Guinea for an overnight stay. Conditions aboard the Hersey were hot and crowded but no serious trouble developed.

Just after midnight 30 Nov 44 the General Hersey dropped anchor off Red Beach on Leyte, Philippines. The ship's skipper, Capt. Smith, was anxious to offload since his ship was very vulnerable to attack and at dawn the Unit went down landing nets into small landing craft for transportation to the beach. The beach was a typical "D plus" beach with confusion everywhere and the 334th subsisted for several days on K-rations issued aboard ship. There was also 16 days of rain without shelter. After existing on the beach for several days the Unit was finally transported by LCM's to Chapman Hill Beach, near Tanuan South of Tacloban, Leyte.

The Unit remained at Tanuan through December 1944, gradually accumulating equipment and returning to a state of effectiveness. No transportation was yet available and the first jeep of the Unit was fashioned from parts of three wrecked jeeps found along Route 1 the only road on

Leyte. On 16 January 45 the 3rd Fighter planes and pilots arrived and the Unit was ready for the job they came to do.

On 20 Jan 45, after a very short stay on Leyte the first move by C-47 was made to Mangalden, Bootstrap strip, near Lingayen Gulf, Luzon. The move took three days and was very well executed since each plane load was precisely figured ahead of time. At this time, 3 officers and 62 EM of the 334th were also sent to Mindoro to support the fighters on temporary duty there. With a split Unit, one on Mendoro and one at Mingalden, each providing full service to the Fighter Squadron, required lots of hard work.

Napalm and bombing attacks in support of infantry forces pushing Gen. Yamashita's Japs up the Villa Verde trail toward eventual defeat and near annihilation caused the following expenditure handled by 334th armorers during March, 1945:

Cal 50 AP-I-T (2-2-1)	548,780 RDS
Bomb G.P. 500	810
Bomb Frag	150

On April 4th 1945, a detachment from the 334th under Capt. Howe was airlifted to Laoag, on Luzon's northwest coast app. 100 miles north of Lingayen. The airstrip there had been manned by Jap service troops who were defeated and run off by a Filipino guerrilla unit. All movement had to be by air and at night since the Japs still held Hy #3, the coast road. By May the coast road was open and the 334th convoy up that road from Mangalden to Laoag was the very first. The field, called Gatu, became heavily operational. The unit had the best physi-cal facilities at Laoag that had been experienced. A commodious screened messhall, good living areas — the works. In May our 51s performed 27 missions to Formosa.

Our Arm. and Ordinance handled: 1487 tons even tho hampered by lack of equipment. An average of 1.4 tons per man per day!

May ordinance from Laoag:

SOObdem	312
Frag	67
Napalm Bombs	622
SOcalAP	173,000 RDS

The 334th functioned at Laoag thru June and July 1945 then moved by LGMs to Ie Shima, in the Ryukku Islands on July 21st.

After Hiroshima, with the war winding down, the unit "marked time" and endured two typhoons with only physical damage to the installation.

Another move by LST to Chitose, on Hokkaido. Chitose, with per-manent buildings, was to be our winter home. On Nov. 8, 1945 all remaining personnel of the 334th Airdrome Sqdn. were transferred to the 3rd Fighter.

So there it was — the end of a long trail. From the southern Philip-pines to northern Japan, the 334th maintained itself and its sister sqdn, the 3rd Fighter and often others as well. We were particularly proud of our maintenance of both ground and air equipment. P-51 "Texas Longhorn" flown by Maj. Tom Williams logged 502 hours and 150 combat missions with no aborts or turnbacks.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.