

335th AIRDROME SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

335th Airdrome Squadron

STATIONS

Iliocos, Philippines

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 335th Airdrome Squadron was activated at Lakeland, Florida 1 May '44 with Capt. Woodson as commanding officer. Personnel largely come from the 97th Tactical Recon Squadron previously based at Thermal, California.

The 335th Airdrome Squadron was responsible for furnishing housing, mess facilities and engineering as well as ordnance and armament for the 4th Fighter Squadron.

The 335th ADS arrived at Leyte, Philippines aboard the USS Gen. Hersey 30 Oct. '44 and quickly unloaded on Red Beach since there was a real danger of enemy attack. There was a great deal of confusion since quarters were not yet set up nor was the equipment available. The next sixteen days were spent braving the elements largely rain. The rain also provided some security, since air strikes from enemy aircraft were less likely and the temperature was bearable.

The Unit moved to an area near Tanuan south of Tachloban where temporary quarters were set up. Equipment was received, tents set up and such luxuries as homemade showers and toilet facilities and the all important mess facilities set up.

On 15 Jan '45 the Air Detachment of the Fourth Fighter Squadron arrived with the new P-51Ds. Two days later the combat unit was ready for action. The steel mat runway was already in place and the pilots complained about its roughness but it was a great improvement over the mud underneath. One of the first missions was a bombing raid on Baguio, Luzon. Each plane carried 2 - 1000 pound bombs, perhaps a first for a P-51. The mission was made without mishap, although several planes had to stop at an alternate on the way back to refuel.

On 20 Jan '45 the first move by C-47 was made to Mingaldan, Luzon near Lingayen Gulf. This was pleasant setting compared to Leyte since there was more room and the airstrip itself was wide permitting planes to take off in flights of four. The natives were quickly hired to construct tent frames from bamboo for living quarters and a mess hall.

The supplies for the mess was limited to the regular Army chow which included dry milk, dried eggs and the ever present Spam. Even the Spam was tolerable, since the innovative cook could fix Spam in ten different ways. On occasions the C-47 pilots returning from Australia would bring back such items as fresh milk, canned turkey and fresh vegetables for a welcome change. Another delicacy was fresh local chicken purchased from the natives. Many tents had a bamboo chicken cage just outside where live chickens were kept. No live chicken loose in the squadron area was safe. It was said, "The fastest thing on two legs was a chicken going through the squadron area being chased by three or more people."

The 335th was busy day and night supplying bombs, ammunition and fuel and getting the planes ready for any mission they were called on to make. It was quite a chore to ready the P-51 aircraft with the proper equipment since the mission request was received late in the day and then changed at the last moment. Equipment was new and relatively reliable but on occasion planes would return with holes to be patched and items replaced that had been damaged. Storage of supplies was also a problem since supply dumps had to be located to provide some protection from enemy air strikes and isolated so that personnel would not be in danger should a bomb go off or a fuel storage dump catch fire.

In early April the first true Commando operation got under way. The move was made to Laoag, Luzon which was located near the northern tip of Luzon, Philippines about 150 miles behind enemy lines. The entire Group was moved by air using the 318th TC C-47s. All the daily

requirements of food, ammunition and fuel were brought in by air as well. The Philippine Guerrillas had pushed back the Japs, clearing an area around Gabu Airstrip and the Third Air Commandos moved in. The daily chore of unloading fuel in 55 gallon drums, and bombs and ammunition as well as all the foodstuff was an around the clock operation.

The Base soon became quite livable and with the assistance of local labor living quarters were built as well as a mess hall and recreation facilities. The area soon became the most comfortable location experienced by the Air Commandos. During the entire period that the Group was at Laoag there was constant effort to further improve living conditions. Recreation facilities were provided with time off to engage in softball, volleyball, and even trips to nearby villages. Here more effort was made to obtain fresh fruits, vegetables, meats and eggs purchased or rather bartered for locally. Natives would rather have scarce items such as sugar, soap and oil than money which was largely worthless. Fresh eggs were a real treat after months of the dried variety. Early in August the 335th moved to Ie Shima in the Ryukyu Islands. While in route word was received that a large bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, Japan with the entire city being destroyed. On August 19 the entire Unit had the privilege of seeing two Japanese Betty bombers with green crosses painted on the sides make their first landing on Ie Shima. This was the Japanese peace mission and the War was over.

There was one last move to the Island of Hokkaido, Japan where the 335th became part of the occupational forces and so it remained until February, 1946 when the Third Air Commando Group was inactivated.

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