

603rd AIR ENGINEERING SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

603rd Air Engineering Squadron activated, 17 Dec 1944
Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

STATIONS

Hill Fld, UT, 17 Dec 1944-23 Apr 1945
North Field, Tinian, May-Oct 1945
Roswell AAF, NM

ASSIGNMENTS

390th Air Service Group

COMMANDERS

Cpt Earl O. Casey

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

On December 17, 1994, the 509th Composite Group was activated and, along with it, the 603rd Air Engineering Squadron. A survey of all the shops was made and only the most highly skilled men were selected to form this new squadron. Approximately sixty percent of the men had been stationed at Wendover for some time before activation. They had already been working as a team, thus eliminating months of training. It was the 603rd's responsibility to see that third and fourth echelon repair and maintenance on the B-29s of the 509th was of the highest caliber. The squadron was so organized that even a major overhaul could be accomplished with factory precision. It was not until the 603rd landed on Tinian that they received their first inkling as to what was to come. Some said that the bomb to be dropped was so powerful, it would take four bulldozers five days to cover up the hole. How far from the truth that was, no one realized. Then the fateful day finally came, the day for which the 603rd had been working and sweating, the mission for which the Group was formed. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. This squadron's contribution to the success of the mission was the culmination of many years of training before activation and the ability to work as a closely knit team.

The 603rd was made up of many departments that together could efficiently repair or manufacture almost any airplane part or piece of equipment. The departments were coordinated by the Maintenance Control Office, which scheduled the work after classification by priority. Attached to this office was Aircraft Inspection, whose function it was to check all airplanes for Tech Order compliance and to see that work was completed in the approved manner. The Drafting Department, also part of Maintenance Control, kept an up-to-date file on all blueprints and put on paper all changes not covered by available drawings. Tech Supply procured aircraft parts and flying equipment and issued mechanics' clothing, tools and other special equipment needed to properly maintain the aircraft. Mobile Repair Units were formed that could go from plane to plane, not only repairing minor damage, but also removing any major portion or component requiring shop work. The specialized shops performed work on propellers, instruments, electrical equipment, bombsights, automatic pilots, armament, radar systems and trainers, auxiliary power units (put-puts), communication and office equipment, and parachutes and other life-saving equipment. The shops augmented line maintenance.

The Sheet Metal Shop repaired or rebuilt any damaged surface of a wing or other metallic structure brought to it by a Mobile Repair Unit. At Wendover, this shop was busy modifying early models of the B-29 to meet the special requirements of the 509th such as turret and blister removal. Even the "all-metal" B-29 has some fabric-covered surfaces, e.g., the canvas on rudders, ailerons, and trim tabs. The Paint, Dope and Fabric Shop covered and painted these items.

Because of the time lost by ground crews in putting accessory parts on an engine, a section called Engine Build-up assembled as many parts on an engine as possible before installation on an airplane. The Welding Shop manufactured and repaired items ranging from small camera mounts to giant crew-chief stands. A Woodworking Shop made desks, shipping crates, stands and many items connected with the Atomic Bomb Project. With the Atomic Bomb Project,

came the need for special precision tools. From blueprints, the Machine Shop manufactured many gadgets never before seen in any shop.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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