

904 EXPEDITIONARY AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

14 Reconnaissance Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 20 Nov 1940

Activated, 15 Jan 1941

Redesignated 404 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 22 Apr 1942

Redesignated 404 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 20 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 5 Jan 1947

904 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy constituted, 9 Feb 1959

Activated, 1 Mar 1959

404 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy and 904 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron retained 904 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy designation.

Inactivated, 1 Oct 1986

Redesignated 904 Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, and converted to provisional status, 12 Jun 2002

STATIONS

Miami Muni Aprt, FL, 15 Jan 1941

MacDill Field, FL, 11 Jun 1941
Barksdale Field, LA, 7 Feb 1942 (operated from Ladd Field, AK, beginning 12 Jul 1942, and from Nome, AK, 18 Jul 1942)
Will Rogers Field, OK, 25 Jul 1942 (operated from Umnak, Aleutian Islands, 24 Aug 1942)
Ft Lewis, WA, 30 Aug-10 Sep 1942 (operated from Adak, Aleutian Islands, 13 Sep 1942)
Elmendorf Field, AK, 21 Sep 1942
Adak, Aleutian Islands, 22 Mar 1943 (operated from Amchitka, Aleutian Islands, 4 Jun 1943)
Shemya, Aleutian Islands, 26 Feb-5 Jan 1947
Mather AFB, CA, 1 Mar 1959-1 Oct 1986

ASSIGNMENTS

44 Bombardment Group, attached 15 Jan 1941, assigned on 25 Feb 1942
28 Composite (later, 28 Bombardment) Group, air echelon attached 12 Jul 1942, squadron assigned 21 Sep 1942
Eleventh Air Force (later, Alaskan Air Command), 20 Oct 1945-5 Jan 1947
4134 Strategic Wing, 1 Mar 1959
320 Bombardment Wing, 1 Feb 1963-1 Oct 1986
Air Mobility Command to activate or inactivate at any time after 12 Jun 2002

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-24, 1941-1947
KC-135, 1959-1986

COMMANDERS

Capt J. V. Crabb, 15 Jan 1941
Capt John H. Hayden, 30 Jan 1941
Unkn, 27 Mar-9 Apr 1942
Lt Col Robert C. Orth, 10 Apr 1942
Maj Richard W. Lavin, 20 Jul 1943
Unkn, 29 Jul-18 Aug 1943
Maj Louis C. Blau, 19 Aug 1943
Maj Thomas O. Wood, 24 Nov 1943
Capt Chadbourne Steward, May 1944 (temporary)
Lt Col Jack T. Loney, 26 May 1944
Maj William H. Beale Jr., Mar 1945 (temporary)
Lt Col Jack T. Loney, Jun 1945
Lt Col John C. Larson, Aug 1945
Maj William H. Beale Jr., 27 Sep 1945
LT COL John C. Larson, 21 Oct 1945
Capt Richard H. Decker, Mar 1946 (temporary)
1st Lt Robert G. Hilger, Apr 1946 (temporary)
Maj David L. Hopkins, May 1946-5 Jan 1947
Maj John J. Naughton, 1 Mar 1959
Lt Col Charles M. Hunter Jr., 13 Apr 1959

Lt Col Richard G. LeFrancis, Jun 1960
Lt Col Ray W. Bauman, Jun 1963
Lt Col William T. Kidder Jr., Mar 1967
Lt Col Mark D. Gale, 20 Dec 1969
Lt Col Eben R. Hubbard, 15 Sep 1971
Lt Col Marshall W. Dickson, 23 Dec 1972
Maj Richard T. Jones, 3 Feb 1972 (Acting)
Lt Col Billy W. Anderson, 31 May 1973
Lt Col Wallace J. Hamilton, Apr 1974
Lt Col Dennis J. O'Brien, 23 Jan 1975
Lt Col Donald E. Duboise, 2 Jul 1976
Maj John N. Luebbermann, 1 Jul 1977
Lt Col Robert A. White, 10 Mar 1978
Lt Col Paul L. Bodine, 29 Aug 1980
Lt Col Grover R. Southerland, 21 Jan 1981
Lt Col Charles C. Adams, 10 Jun 1982
Lt Col Timothy L. Titus, 30 Jul 1982
Lt Col Terry R. Fowler, 18 Jan 1984
Lt Col Gary A. Jorgenson, 27 Jan-1 Oct 1986

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Japan
Aleutian Islands
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Central and Northern Kurile Islands, 1 Apr 1944-13 Aug 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
[18 Jun-31 Jul 1965] and [1 Dec 1965-1 Mar 1966]
2 Mar-1 Apr 1966
1 Jul 1974-30 Jun 1976
1 Jul 1981-30 Jun 1983

EMBLEM



14 Reconnaissance Squadron (Heavy) emblem: Over and through a light green disc, bordure black, piped white, a caricatured white elephant running, wearing aviator's goggles with gold rim trimmed black, black belt about the waist, holding two machine guns pointing to rear, grasping a large yellow aerial bomb upraised in trunk, having two black machine guns for tusks and ears in shape of wings, soles of hind feet brown. Emblem designed by Sgt J. B. Nunn. Approved, 21 Nov 1942.

On 8 Jul 1942, the 404th Bombardment Squadron arrived in the Alaskan theater with B-24 aircraft originally destined for the North African theater. The Liberators, brand new, were painted with a brilliant pink camouflage, satisfactory for desert warfare and admirably unsuited for Alaska use. The squadron appropriately was nick-named "The Pink Elephants" and the unit insignia, a flying pink elephant with fifty-caliber machine guns for tusks and carrying in his raised trunk a bomb, rampant upon a blue background, became one of the most familiar in the Alaskan Theater.

904 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy emblem approved, 14 Apr 1960

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Antisubmarine patrols in Gulf of Mexico, Feb-Jun 1942; combat in Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, and Northern Pacific, 18 Jul 1942-13 Aug 1945. Radar mapping of Aleutians and Alaska, 1945-1946.

Following the Dutch Harbor attack, the Japanese landed forces on the western Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska. Additional reinforcements consisting of the 21st and 404th Bombardment Squadrons, equipped with B-24s; the 406th Bombardment Squadron, A-29s; the 54th Fighter Group, P-39s; and 54th Fighter Squadron, P-38s were sent to Alaska. The Eleventh Air Force

launched an air offensive against the Japanese on the two islands.

After a five-month break, the Eleventh Air Force resumed the missions against the northern Kuriles and continued to fly them until the end of the war. The 404th Bombardment Squadron operated from Shemya with its B-24s, and the 73rd and 77th Bombardment Squadrons flew from Alexie with B-25s. The three squadrons conducted some of the longest over-water flights of the war under the most adverse weather conditions and were able to tie down a significant number of Japanese, including ten percent of its air force, who could have been employed to advantage elsewhere.

The 10,000-foot Shemya runway, along with two 5,000-foot cross runways supported a variety of aircraft. The 404th Bombardment Squadron flew B-24's along with one Beechcraft AT-7, which was used for navigator training. The 344th Fighter Squadron flew both P-40s and P-38s. In addition, a North American AT-6 was utilized for pilot training. One RB-34, a UC-64A and numerous TB-26s were flown by the 15th Tow Target Squadron that was stationed on Shemya. Many administrative and cargo aircraft, such as the C-47 flew in and out of Shemya during the war.

In March 1944, the pouring of concrete piers for a fighter hangar was also completed. After digging the drainage ditches and laying the drainage pipe, all work had to stop until the required lumber from Attu arrived in the last week of March. By the end of May, this hangar was complete and in operation. In addition to the fighter hangar, Shemya was also authorized one Kodiak "T" hangar and fourteen Birchwood hangars. The first Birchwood Hangar was erected on the north side of the main runway, 2,500 feet from the west end. But only six of the fourteen hangars had been completed by the end of the war. Hangar Number One was for the Navy; Number Two was for the Base Engineer; the 344th Fighter Squadron used Hangar Number Three, while the 11th Fighter Squadron had Number Four. The last two, Numbers Five and Six, were utilized by the two other combat flying squadrons on Shemya - the 15th Tow Target Squadron and the 404th Bombardment Squadron.

As a direct result of the Japanese air raid on Attu on October 13, 1943, the 54th Fighter Squadron, flying P-38's arrived on Shemya from Amchitka. Another transfer for base defense purposes was the bringing of thirty-one dogs and seven handlers to Shemya in October 1943. The removal from Adak and transfer to Shemya of the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, XI Bomber Command on January 8, 1944, attested to the importance of Shemya for bombing operations. Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of the 28th Bombardment Group, Composite, was ordered to Shemya from Adak on January 10th. On the eleventh, the 404th Bombardment Squadron (H) was ordered from Adak to Shemya. The Headquarters, XI Bomber Command officially opened on February 28, 1944. By the close of the month the average strength of the base had reached 126 officers and 1,216 enlisted men.

This was the deepest penetration as of that date made into the Japanese homeland since the Doolittle-Halsey raid on Tokyo in April 1942. Over one year later, on May 10, 1945, one of the longest reconnaissance missions departed Shemya. Twelve B-24s of the 404th Bombardment

Squadron (H), with an objective of Paramushiru, one the Kuril group of islands, divided into two groups of six each upon arrival over the target. One group photographed the western section while the other photographed the eastern section, and a total of over 1,300 negatives were taken. Personnel of the First Photo Flight (L) developed them and made 8,000 prints in less than forty-eight hours. The next day the most successful bombing raid in the history of the 404th took place. A twelve-plane flight, led by Captain Robert Wechman and Lieutenant Charles Weniger, found a clear sky and a shipping aisle. Several direct hits were scored on a destroyer escort and much damage was done to the harbor of Katsoka Naval Base. Another one of the longest overwater combat missions flown anywhere in the world until then took place on June 19, 1945. Lieutenants David Long and Paul Chinhaenbeard, of the 404th, flew 2,700 miles on a photo reconnaissance mission over the island of Uruppu in the Kuriles. They were aloft 15 hours and 30 minutes. From January to August 1945 a total of 393 tons of bombs was dropped by the 404th. Of this tonnage, 56.3 per cent were by planes utilizing the airborne radar system. May and June were the busiest months of the year with approximately eighty-eight tons being dropped. The primary targets were Katakka Naval Base on the island of Shimishiru. In addition, in the Kuriles, Paramushiru and Shinush were attacked; the military and naval installations, along with the canneries which furnished much of Japan's food, were the priority targets on these islands. There were also some bright spots in the 404th history. The ground forces had a laugh on the Air Corps when a submarine was spotted and reported sunk. A dead whale was found in the vicinity a few hours later.

Radar mapping of Aleutian Islands and Alaska, 1945-1946.

Aerial refueling operations, 1959-1986

904 Air Refueling Squadron achieved combat ready status as of 8 Sep 59.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook, *Mather AFB, CA, Jenny to Jets, 45th Anniversary, 1918-1963*, Army and Navy Publishing Co. Inc., Baton Rouge, LA, 1963.