

10 STATION COMPLEMENT SQUADRON (SPECIAL)

MISSION

LINEAGE

10 Station Complement Squadron (Special) activated, 15 Apr 1943

STATIONS

Jacksonville AAF, Jacksonville, FL
Wendling, Norfolk, England

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj John H. Trossbach
Maj Arthur W. Bledsoe, 3 May 1943
Maj Elisha R. Daughtrey
Capt Franklin W. Dawson

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The mission of a Station Complement Squadron, Special, is the performance of the various base housekeeping duties which will continue during the absence as well as the presence of other combat or service units. Specifically these duties will arise from the operation of base utilities, operations, base dispensary, supply section, fire department, telephone and teletype circuits, base gas defense SOP, and any necessary fatigue details.

The original enlisted cadre of six men were assigned from the Third Air Force Replacement Depot, Plant Park, Tampa, Florida on 18 April 1943. The cadre consisted of 1/Sgt Clement N. Olson, S/Sgt Albert A. Bury, S/Sgt James H. Davidson, S/Sgt Marty Kapchuk, Sgt Robert H. Cranshaw and Cpl. Alvin R. Enlow.

Officers first assigned to the squadron were Major John H. Trossbach, Commanding; Captain Arthur W. Bledsoe, Executive Officer; 1/Lt Charles H. Steele, Adjutant; Captain Gene Cofield, S-3; 1/Lt Franklin W. Dawson, Asst S-3; 1/Lt Clark V. Britton, Supply Officer, 1/Lt Lloyd A. Bimson, Assistant Supply Officer; and 2/Lt Raymond E. Dell, Mess and Transportation Officer. These officers were assigned from Dale Mabry Field, Tallahassee, Florida.

Subsequent orders relieved Major Trossbach as Commanding Officer and Captain Bledsoe was appointed Squadron Commander in his stead. This was on May 3, 1943. On May 14 Lieutenant Dawson was shifted from his duties as Assistant S-3 and appointed Squadron Adjutant vice Lieutenant Charles H. Steel, transferred to Kellogg Field, Michigan. Other changes in principal duties of the officers saw Lieutenant Erol R. Coleman, newly assigned, assume the duties of Mess and Transportation Officer, relieving Lieutenant Dell who was transferred to Dale Mabry Field. And Lieutenant Britton, Supply Officer transferred to Kellogg Field, was replaced by Lieutenant Bimson.

In the early weeks following activation the Squadron grew rapidly from its small cadre to a full strength of 108 enlisted men, these men being assigned from various Air Force installations throughout the United States. When all personnel passed field service physical examinations the Squadron embarked on a period of intensified field training. All officers and enlisted men went on a bivouac to Camp Blanding, Florida where two days were spent in qualification exercises with the caliber .30 rifle M-1903. At a later date when carbines and sub-machine guns had been issued the men fired familiarization courses at the nearby Jacksonville Rod and Gun Club range. All obtainable Unit equipment was crated and made ready for overseas shipment.

By the middle of May 1943, the Squadron had completed its activation and field training and was prepared for the next stage in its history-overseas movement.

At 0900 hours on 26 May 1943, the Squadron of 108 enlisted men and six officers entrained at Jacksonville, FL bound for Camp Kilmer, NJ, the staging area for overseas shipment. The train arrived at Camp Kilmer at 1030 hours on 27 May 1943. In the ten days' stay at the staging area all personnel records were examined and brought up to date, equipment shortages filled, Typhus immunizations given and a final shake-down inspection made.

At 1100 hours on 6 June the Squadron, now 106 enlisted men, departed from Camp Kilmer by Government Motor Transport to the Staten Island Terminal of the New York Port of Embarkation. The men boarded the S.S. Villa D'Anvers at 1530 hours. On the following morning the Villa D'Anvers backed away from the pier and headed through the Narrows out to sea where contact was made with a large convoy.

During the crossing the convoy was subjected to a three-day running attack by enemy submarines. No casualties were sustained. The transport docked at Swansea, Wales at approximately 2200 hours on 21 June and on the following morning the squadron debarked and boarded a troop train for Thetford, Norfolk, England. By motor convoy the squadron moved from Thetford station to Army Air force Station 115 at Shipdham, Norfolk.

On 1 July 1943 the Squadron was divided into two detachments; Detachment "A" of forty enlisted men remaining at Station 115 and the other sixty men and officers moving to Station 118 at Wendling, Norfolk. At this station the Squadron made the field ready for the arrival of the 392nd Bomb Group and attached units which moved in on 2 August 1943. Shortly thereafter Detachment "A" was brought up from Shipdham and the Squadron reunited. The 10th SCS was on operation full strength for the first time in performance of the mission for which it was designed-operation of base utilities, flying control, transportation and similar auxiliary services.

In early December additional administrative, medical, transportation and mess personnel were assigned from the 74th Service Squadron and 317th Service Group. This brought the total strength of 218 enlisted men and 18 officers. The cadre for the new 74th Service Squadron, the came from the 10th Station Complement. Major Bledsoe (promoted from Captain in September) was relieved as squadron commander and Maj Elisha R. Daughtrey assumed command. Major Bledsoe was appointed Station Administrative Inspector.

On 2-12 Feb 1944, the complete squadron was checked for immunizations and also the entire squadron checked their gas masks in the gas chamber. About a week later all personnel were issued the new style service mask so the squadron will have to go through the chamber again shortly to insure the perfection of the new mask. All persons were in hearty approval of the new mask due to its compactness and smaller size.

The months of January and February saw most of the Officers and Enlisted Men in the Squadron spend their furloughs in either London or Edinburgh promoting Anglo-American relations. All came back with reports of very enjoyable time and great anticipation for the next forthcoming leave.

During the month of July 1944 not much happened to the 10th outside of a few items which will be noted in the contents of the following. The general feeling and morale of the men in the Squadron remained as high as it always has been. The current invasion of France and the increased Russian Offensive haven't caused too much excitement for the 10th outside of an increase in missions and sorties therefore causing a great increase in the amount of work that has to be put out each day by the personnel assigned to Flying Control. The men in that section and all over the field for that matter are all pepped up and feel that each mission and all the work they produce towards that mission brings us all closer to final victory and above all home.

Although during the month the 10th was authorized to reduce its nightly number of guards on the planes the Squadron is still feeling the effects of tying personnel up in doing Guard duty. The authorized number at the present is five to a shift thereby using ten men a night. Also in July the order instructing all personnel to carry their battle equipment with them at all times was amended and now it is only necessary to carry the battle equipment to and from places of work.

The Base Utilities section of the 10th has been forced to increase its already schedule of more and more work to more work. Consequently the personnel assigned to that department have been restricted to the base and are working night and day pouring concrete on the runways and doing the other many jobs about the base. The Squadron Commander upon request gave them a helping hand and removed the Utilities section of the squadron off the duty roster for a period of two weeks.

The only relief in the pass situation for the month of July for the remainder of the personnel in the Squadron was the lifting of the 25-mile restriction so that now the men in the Squadron can go to towns such as Wisbisch [probably Wisbech], Long Sutton, Boston, Spalding, and Cambridge legally on their 24-hour passes.

Along with its policy and actuality of having the best barracks and area on the base-rated Superior by the Group Executive Officer on his inspection-the 10th is now striving towards the goal of being the most military unit on the base. A system of close order drill was established so that all enlisted personnel of the Squadron get in at least six hours a week of drilling. The drill periods were held between 0730 and 0830 hours in the morning and between 1300 and 1400 hours in the afternoon. This drill has been in effect for about three weeks and we hope it will end around the first or second week in August. Much improvement has been shown in the military bearing and military courtesy of the personnel in the Squadron since this drilling has commenced. It also gave the non-commissioned officers of the Squadron the chance to see how poor they were as drill sergeants and consequent training derived from drilling men during this time has made many of them realize their responsibilities as a non-commissioned officer more thoroughly and even made better soldiers out of them. The favorite saying of the men in the squadron during these drill periods is that we are training to go overseas and march down Fifth Avenue in New York. The overseas part naturally means going back to the states as most of the boys have been over here a year or better and some darn near two and a half years.

The 10th had its party this month and a good time was had by all. The party went off in a much smoother fashion than some of the preceding parties due perhaps to a more sufficient quantity of beer and the fact that the girls were not allowed to wander about the base as before therefore causing more of them to be at the party. As has happened in the past about half of the gals would wind up in different living sites on the base with their steady boyfriends. Also at the last party the 10th was only allotted two 36-gallon kegs of beer due to a shortage whereas at this party the 10th had five 36-gallon kegs of beer-one more than it should have but that was to make up for the lack of beer at the last party. All had a good time and the gals also went home pleased with the outcome of the party. Some of them were in pretty fair shape at that.

The bicycle situation still prevails but only a few isolated instances were noted of one or two of the men suffering from "bicyclitist". All but one of the eleven missing bicycles has been located and a report of Survey is being initiated to cover the loss of that cycle. S/Sgt Andrews the Supply Sergeant really did a good job in locating some of the missing cycles. Bikes are his biggest problem at the present time.

The Station Defense is still using combat men who have completed their 30 sorties over Hitler's territory as part of its personnel in addition to the regular personnel that is assigned to that section. Their nightly hours have been shorter this month but will pick up as darkness increases. So far they only have had to go to their respective pits each night and we hope no enemy action makes them do otherwise. The boys are always on the job and ready for any action that might occur.

Part of the personnel of the 10th attended fire-fighting lectures put out by the Station Fire Marshall during the month and the entire squadron is to attend a demonstration on fire-fighting equipment and a lecture sometime in August. The men were instructed in the proper equipment etc to be used in extinguishing any type of fire that might possibly present itself. It is a good thing for the personnel of the squadron and all men attending the classes really appreciate what they are learning.

In the first week of August 1944 personnel of the 10th attended a lecture or fire show held on the station's ball field demonstrating how to use various types of fire extinguishers and foam, water and other expedients in putting out fires. It was very educational and interesting to see and all personnel received plenty of good out of this lecture. Perhaps some day it will save a good deal of money.

October 1944 Friday the 13th proved to be an eventful evening for the boys who stayed in the camp in that about 2040 hours three buzz bombs strayed off their course and came close to the squadron site. The first buzz bomb according to the flying control personnel in the tower could have made a perfect landing on our main and longest runway and that at the time it crossed the field it was lower than the second story of the flying control building which would make it about 15 or more feet off the ground. Completely too low for comfort for one of those babies.

There was no alert sounded because these buzz bombs came so fast that there was not enough time to summon an officer to announce an alert.

The first buzz bomb went parallel to the squadron site at a still low altitude and the boys watching it only hoped that the motor would keep going and not cut out which it didn't but drove itself into the ground and an explosion in a pond just outside of Longham about two miles from camp. About the only damage it did was to deepen the pond and water the surrounding territory.

The second one was much farther away from the camp and all that was seen was the explosion flash but the third one went right over the squadron latrine about 100 feet in the air and the men in the area at the time had for most of them their first look at a buzz bomb. The bomb landed in the suburbs of Wisbisch [probably Wisbech] about 35 or 40 miles away. This was the first time some of the fellows had ever been close to a buzz bomb and its results and they really did gain a lot of respect for them. In fact most of the men thought that the first one was the RAF going out or coming back low as the dickens until someone shouted "buzz bomb" and then the fellows rushed out to see the flash and hear the explosion.

November 1944 It also brought about for the majority of the men in the outfit a second Thanksgiving Day dinner in the ETO. Mess Hall #3 certainly did themselves justice in that a very elegant meal was prepared and served in accordance with quality and for once quantity. No one went back for seconds and most of the men wondered just where they were going to put the full course of the dinner from soup to nuts literally. It was an excellent meal and all the men gorged themselves and upon leaving the dinner table headed for the barracks and the good old sack if possible to sleep off the effects of so much good food. The enlisted men's club opened at 1500 hours and the more hardy of the men went to guzzle some brew. Withal it was a red letter day as far as chow was concerned for the average G.I. on the field. The cooks of mess number two did a fine job. Sorry to say but the following day many of the men fell heir to from slight to severe cases of the G.I.'s. The blame was put on the dark meat of the turkey by some of the mess personnel. It was too bad such a fine spread of food had to be followed by an illness of that sort. Inconvenient at any time and anywhere.

The entire squadron was shot on the 26th and 27th of the month for Typhus at the Station Dispensary. Also on Sunday the 26th of the month the enlisted personnel of the Squadron opened wide in front of the Orderly Room - no rain for a change - and had a Dental Inspection.

On January 27, 1945 after an exceptionally heavy snowfall, each squadron on the base had to send some men down to work with the Utilities crew and get the runways clean for a mission the next day. About 100 men worked until 2 o'clock in the morning and were well repaid when they saw the ships take off as scheduled next morning.

The telephone linemen of this outfit have also been having their share of work due to the uncooperative weather. Big chunks of ice have formed on many telephone wires, causing them to snap under the weight. However, no sooner is a line reported out of order, when a couple of

the linemen are out on the job. At the moment, the telephone system on the base is functioning without complaint.

On the first part of February this station was honored by a visit from a War Manpower Board consisting of two Colonels and a Major. Their job was to see how many men on this base were doing jobs that could be done or handled by fewer men and to decrease or recommend a decrease in personnel of the station if necessary. The prevalent rumor at the time was that if they found anyone who was idle or with not enough work to keep him busy then there was a suitable candidate for Infantry Reinforcement Training with a rifle and the pack. During their three-day stay the daily attendance at the Red Cross Aero Club was practically non-existent. It was shortly after they left that the chosen few were picked for the Infantry. (The word "shanghaied" will be substituted upon request.) Many of the fellows that left had been with the 10th Station almost since the day the outfit was formed in Jacksonville, Florida, in April of 1943. There were some sad farewells, but war is like that all in all, the departing warriors left with a spirit of bravado saying they'd be seeing us back home, if not sooner, on the other side of the channel. Also at this time Sgt Robert "Bob" Cranshaw volunteered for Infantry OCS and left his buddies of the outfit. Bob was one of the few originals left since the date of activation. He figured that he could beat the draft and we all hope he makes the grade as an officer. It looks as if the outfit will be down to old men and "4-Fs" of the Army if the Infantry keeps calling.

Flying Control personnel were kept busier than they had been for some time. Getting the long-awaited break in the weather during the latter part of the month, our Liberators were up almost continually. Watching the planes come back after a mission with empty bomb bays that only a few hours ago had rained tons of death on Germany is compensation enough for any extra work that had to be done.

Utilities Section, having lost four more men to that much talked-about outfit known as "the Infantry", has really been hard hit. However, in a few days replacements arrived in the form of a number of combat gunners, who had anywhere from 2 to 22 missions in over Hitler's terrain. They were put on Detached Service with Utilities for about a month. In addition, they were given a number of former ack-ack gunners to help them. Once again base utilities is at full strength and helping to keep this base a suitable place to live in and above all to help keep it operational.

News from the other departments is more or less static. Everyone is working just a little harder, trying to prove how essential he is to the Air Corps.

Also during March 1945 the unit changed Commanding Officers with Major Elisha R. Daughtrey going back to the good old U.S.A. on an emergency rotation plan. Captain Franklin W. Dawson assumed command upon the Major's leaving and already the outfit has noticed the difference. It was a fortunate break for the Major and it was agreed that some of the men would want to go back to their homes under the same conditions as he. Captain Dawson also assumed the

duties as Station Administrative Inspector upon the change, it being a 2nd Air Division policy that the complement squadron commander also be the Station Administrative Inspector.

About the next thing was the blossoming arrival of a group of new men from the good old USA. It was very interesting for the old veterans of the outfit to listen to the running commentary on the ETO by the new men. A few good old Army bitching sessions immediately cropped up with the new men adding newer angles on the old song-and-dance routine. At least it was felt by the 10th that it now has the champion griper of the ETO in one of the new arrivals. Their arrival was celebrated by a strafe job from a Jerry plane on our airdrome that same evening. Naturally the older men told them it was a nightly occurrence and some of them were really worried about their future hours of sleep being interrupted each evening. Numbers of "Red" and "Black" alerts were broadcast during the period of March. This time March winds blew in "Jerry" nuisance raiders instead of April showers.

Flying Control has really been putting out a great deal of work this month. Getting missions off practically every day makes them hop, skip, and jump. The personnel enjoy that because each successful mission is a mission that much closer to ultimate victory and the return to the blue serge we all want so bad. Anyway we all hope so.

The rest of the departments are still plugging along the same as far as possible and getting their own little individual part done towards putting the awkward-looking Libs into the air and over Hitler's failing fortress of Europe.

As far as the 10th Station for the month of April 1945 is concerned it really never had an opportunity to function because on the 15th of the month it was disbanded under the provisions contained in General Orders #52, HQ 8th Air force dated 12 April 1945.

The majority of personnel of the 10th were transferred to the 403rd Headquarters and Base Services Squadron. It appeared that the 10th was the nucleus for the new Headquarters Squadron and the fellows would stay on their same jobs as before. Most of the men welcomed the change in that possibly they would be able to fill some T O vacancy. But the rank was over in many cases so consequently nothing in the line of promotions for enlisted men could be seen but as usual there is a chance for some of the officers to gain well-earned promotions. Up to the 15th of the month the men of the 10th under the guidance of Lt Fish were doing a fine job of preparing a good softball team. They will have to work it out under the new outfit now but the old 10th will carry on in spirit because it will be the warriors of the 10th that will win for the 403rd.

It is not generally remembered that the 10th Station personnel did not ship out of Camp Kilmer in full strength. Due to shortage of available shipping space, four officers and seven EM were left behind, but in spite of all our misguided hopes and prayers, this arrangement was only temporary. One week after the rest of the outfit left, the 7 EM, with S/Sgt Boyer in charge, were herded into a G.I. truck and headed for the Staten Island pier. When we arrived, there were 5 Red Cross volunteers at the dock, graciously serving lemonade and doughnuts and after

about half an hour of heroically-accepted condolences, we made ready for the fatal 40 steps up the gangplank. The boat was quite empty and lonesome when we boarded, but in about one hour, things were quite to the contrary. A battalion of Army engineers were to be our shipmates for this memorable voyage and soon they made their presence known. The seven of us had grabbed the first stateroom we came across, but it seems that someone thought a room about 6' x 9' was much too large for seven men. Five of the engineers were immediately attached to our room for rations, quarters and anything else of interest to them that we had. Just outside our room was a piano and for 16 nights running, someone was always trying to find out why it wouldn't play the right tune.

In spite of all discomforts the boat got underway about midnight 15 June. When we awoke the next morning we were just about in the middle of a convoy of 100 other ships, which was a comfortable feeling to all of us. The first week was spent in hatching some wild rumors about what might happen to us the second week. In between we managed, by sheer ingenuity, to get in about 8 hours of poker a day. On the twelfth night, just as Shakespeare anticipated, we had our first taste of action. We had disbanded our convoy the previous afternoon and were not sailing all alone. It was about 2300 hours when we saw flares in the distance. At first, we thought that it was from land in the distance, but when the order came for all hands to go below deck and stand by with helmets and carbine, we knew that if we were near land, it must be German-held. An invasion of German-held territory hardly appealed to us at the moment, all the less so because we had no ammunition for our carbines. The ammunition had been collected and stored before we started and brave men that we were, we realized that rifle butts would be a bit insufficient in this crisis.

There were some 200-odd men, standing and sweating below decks with helmets on and empty weapons, listening to a terrific bombardment outside. Some volunteered to go out on deck and throw their rifles at any enemy planes that might come low enough, but the ship's captain, not being sure of the men's aim, had to reject their offer. After about 2 hours, all noise subsided and we were told we could get some sleep. Rumor had it that the convoy we had left had been attacked but never having gotten any official verification, it will have to remain a rumor. Nevertheless, there wasn't much sleep to be had that night. It's quite different than sleeping in a nice warm barrack bed. It is awfully difficult to sleep and listen for enemy fire at the same time. Next morning, we were all alone, surrounded only by endless mountains of water and our thoughts. For the first time, we flew a barrage balloon overhead, and that in itself was good for a few rumors. Without further incident we arrived in Wales at 0700 hours on 29 June. Dry land never looked so good, although we were later to learn that the land isn't usually so dry in England.

The engineers disembarked that morning but the seven of us had to spend another day on the ship. Next morning, we were taken by truck to the nearest railroad station from where we went on to AAF Station 115 at Shipdham. There we were reunited with our outfit and split into 2 groups, one of which stayed at Station 115 and the other which went to AAF Station 118 at Wendling. Eventually both groups were coordinated at Station 118 in Wendling and the usual fantastic yarns of their experiences at sea started making the rounds. It's amazing to note that

in spite of all the hardships endured, not one of the outfit was even a minor casualty.
Imagination is a wonderful thing.

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Unit history. *14 Bombardment Wing*. 1945.