

24 TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE¹

24 Attack-Bombardment Squadron constituted, 1 Aug 1939

Redesignated 24 Bombardment Squadron (Light), 28 Sep 1939

Activated, 1 Dec 1939

Disbanded, 1 May 1942

24 Photographic Mapping Squadron constituted, 14 Jul 1942

Activated, 2 Sep 1942

Redesignated 24 Photographic Squadron (Heavy), 6 Feb 1943

Redesignated 24 Combat Mapping Squadron, 11 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 15 Jun 1946

Redesignated 24 Reconnaissance Squadron (Very Long Range, Photographic-RCM), 13 May 1947

Activated in the reserve, 12 Jul 1947

Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949

Redesignated 24 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Medium, Photographic

Activated, 10 Oct 1951

Redesignated 24 Bombardment Squadron, Medium, 16 Jun 1952

Redesignated 24 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Medium and inactivated, 16 Jan 1953

¹ Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

24 Helicopter Squadron constituted 24 Feb 1956
Activated, 9 Jul 1956
Discontinued and inactivated, 8 Mar 1960
Redesignated 24 Special Operations Squadron and activated, 18 Mar 1969
Inactivated, 1 Jul 1975
Redesignated 24 Composite Squadron and activated, 1 Jan 1976

24 Bombardment Squadron (Light), 24 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (Medium) and
24 Composite Squadron consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated organization designated
24 Composite Squadron.

Redesignated 24 Tactical Air Support Squadron, 1 Jan 1987
Inactivated, 31 Mar 1991

STATIONS

Maxwell Field, AL, 1 Dec 1939
Orlando, FL, 2 Sep 1940
Eglin Field, FL, 29 Jun 1941-1 May 1942
Colorado Springs, Colo, 2 Sep 1942
Will Rogers Field, Okla, 13 Oct-8 Nov 1943
Guskhara, India, 5 Jan 1944 (detachments operated from Hsinching, China, 17 Mar-9 Apr 1944;
Jorhat, India, 9-22 Apr 1944; Hsinching, China, 27 Apr-c. 1 Jul 1944; Liuchow, China, 10 Jul-22
Sep 1944; Chanyi, China, 22 Sep 1944-17 Feb 1945 [elements at Hsinching, China, Oct-Nov
1944, and at Pengshan, China, Nov 1944])
Tulihal and Cox's Bazaar, India, Feb-c. Apr 1945
Kanchrapara, India, 27 Dec 1945-17 Jan 1946
Clark Field, Luzon, 29 Jan-15 Jun 1946 (detachment operated from Sydney, Australia, Jan-15 Jun
1946)
Hamilton Field, Calif, 12 Jul 1947-27 Jun 1949
Lake Charles AFB, La, 10 Oct 1951-16 Jan 1953
Sewart AFB, TN 1956-12 Oct 56
Tachikawa AB, Honshu, Japan -1960
Howard AB, Canal Zone (Panama) 1969-1975
Howard AB, Canal Zone (Panama) 1976-1991

ASSIGNMENTS

23 Composite Group (later Air Corps Proving Ground Detachment; Air Forces Proving Ground
Group), 1 Dec 1939-1 May 1942
5 Photographic (later Photographic Reconnaissance and Mapping; Photographic
Reconnaissance) Group, 2 Sep 1942
Third Air Force, 9 Oct 1943
III Reconnaissance Command, 12 Oct 1943
AAF, India-Burma Sector, 26 Dec 1943

Tenth Air Force, 7 Mar 1944
8 Photographic (later Reconnaissance) Group, 25 Apr 1944
AAF, India-Burma Theater, 20 Sep 1945
Thirteenth Air Force, 28 Jan 1946
313 Bombardment Wing, 1 Apr-15 Jun 1946
68 Reconnaissance Group, 12 Jul 1947-27 Jun 1949
68 Strategic Reconnaissance Group, 10 Oct 1951
68 Bombardment Wing, 16 Jun 1952-16 Jan 1953
18 Air Force 1956-12 Oct 56
315 Air Division
24 Special Operations Wing/Special Operations Group/Composite Group 1969-1975
24 Composite Group/Composite Wing
830 Air Division 1991

ATTACHMENTS

5306 Photographic and Reconnaissance Group [Prov], 26 Dec 1943-17 Jan 1944
Tenth Air Force, 17 Jan-7 Mar 1944
314 Troop Carrier Wing 1956-Oct 56

WEAPON SYSTEMS

A-12
A-18
A-20
XA-21
B-10
B-12
B-18
B-23
B-25
C-36
C-40
YFM-1
O-38
PB-2
PT-17
SBD-1 (USN)
B-24/F-7, 1943
F-7, 1944-1946
B-25, 1944
F-13, 1946
B-29, 1952-1953
B-24J
F-7A
B-25H

F-7B
L-5B

COMMANDERS

Maj Joseph H. Atkinson 18 Feb 1940-Sep 1941
Unknown, Sep 1941-7 Dec 1941

HONORS

Service Streamers
American Theater

Campaign Streamers

India-Burma
China Defensive
Central Burma.

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



24 Combat Mapping Squadron emblem: Over and through a medium blue disc, wide border yellow orange, edged black, a caricatured wolf wearing brown aviator's helmet and shoes, yellow sweater, red gloves and trousers, and having brown revolver in holster about waist, running toward dexter, in front of a large, white cloud formation, holding a sheet of white paper in the right hand, pointing a black aerial camera toward base with the left forepaw, and leaving black horizontal speed lines to rear. (Approved, 2 Apr 1945.)



24 Helicopter Squadrons (Support) emblem approved, 8 Jul 1956



24 Tactical Air Support Squadron patch

MOTTO

AGUA TIERRA AIRE--Water Land Air

OPERATIONS

Operations of the 24 Combat Mapping Squadron during the first half of 1945 consisted chiefly of mapping a large section of Central and Southern Burma, and parts of Thailand and French Indo-China, as well as finishing up operations in China.

March was the outstanding month; in fact, a record month for the squadron from the standpoint of photo miles flown. A total of 22,234 miles of flight lines were flown in March, 11,000 being chalked up in the first ten days alone.

In all, more than 455,000 square miles of territory were mapped in the six-month period, all but 18,000 square miles being in Burma, Thailand and Indo-China. On one day in January, the most successful day of operations from the Home Base, five planes took off from Gushkara and flew 2,300 photo miles over Burma, encountering no enemy action. Burma operations were carried on for the most part from two forward bases, one at Tulihal and the other at Cox's Bazaar, both in India. It was from these bases in March that 333,310 square miles were mapped.

On four occasions, enemy flak was run into over Jap-held Mandalay-Lashio Railroad, and one of the planes was slightly damaged by a shell fragment. One plane, after taking off from the base at Cox's Bazaar, crashed into the Bay of Bengal. Only four of the nine crew members escaped.

In winding up six months of operations in China, 2,740 photo miles were flown early in 1945. More than 435,000 square miles had been mapped in China, where the 24 made history at both of its forward bases, Liuchow and Chanyi. For these operations, under what was described in a commendation from Maj. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer as "More than hazardous conditions of battle," the squadron was awarded a battle participation star.

With the return of the planes from China in February, the squadron was all together once more for the first time since the Ground Echelon had left Will Rogers Field at Oklahoma City in November 1943.

At a squadron review on 17 February, nearly 100 medals were presented to flying personnel of the 24. Included were six Distinguished Flying Crosses. Additional awards of Air Medals, clusters and DFC's brought the total to more than 325. Soldier's Medals were received by two officers and an enlisted man for heroism in extinguishing a fire aboard a burning plane, and by four other enlisted men for putting out a refueling truck fire.

Among the commendations received by the squadron - now designated the "Wily Wolves" - was one for the excellent photographs made of the Burma coast in the Akyab area at both high and low tides.

The squadron changed commanding officers on 23 March, when Major John M. Hubers, formerly Operations officer, succeeded Lt. Col. Glendon N. King, who was transferred to the 8th Photo Group, Rcn., to become Group Executive Officer.

Lab personnel gave two weeks of instruction to a group of officers of the Chinese National Army on mapping technique, and a training program for both air and ground personnel of the squadron was launched in April, after the completion of current missions.

The 24 observed its first anniversary at its base on 5 January 1945, and reached the 18-month mark of overseas service the 17th of May. Rotation of crew members began in March when 13

officers and 26 enlisted men left for what the War Department chooses to call the "Zone of the Interior."

While much has been written about the superiority of the Consolidated B-24 Liberator versus the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress in the Pacific Theater during the Second World War (in short, it could carry more a longer range and at higher speeds than the B-17), there is one role that the B-24 played in the Pacific that still remains relatively unknown to most, that of combat mapping. The missions flown in particular by the 24 Combat Mapping Squadron in the China-Burma-India theater were of tremendous contribution to the overall war effort even though the crews of the 24 CMS fought their battles with rolls of film rather than bombs.

On 2 September 1942, the 24 Combat Mapping Squadron was established as the 24 Photo Mapping Squadron at Petersen Field in Colorado Springs, Colorado. They were subsequently moved to Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City to operate the reconnaissance variant of the Consolidated B-24 Liberator which was designated the F-7. Prior to the creation of an independent United States Air Force, the "F" designator was used for photo reconnaissance aircraft while the "P" (for Pursuit) was used for fighter aircraft. The first F-7s arrived in January 1943 as basic conversions of the B-24D Liberator which removed all bombing equipment and replaced with eleven cameras. All the defensive armament of the Liberator was retained. Most of the conversions to F-7s were done at Lowry Army Air Field in Denver, but additional examples were also converted by Northwest Orient Airlines at their Minneapolis maintenance base. Most of what the 24 did in Oklahoma City was the training of crews to prepare for deployment to the Pacific. Unlike other reconnaissance crews, though, the 24 CMS would be tasked with providing detailed aerial photography of the China-Burma-India area for the creation of detailed navigation maps as well as other types of maps needed for the war effort.

The unit arrived at Guskhara, India in January 1944 with improved versions of the F-7 which were designated F-7A. The F-7A photo recon Liberator was based on the nose-turret equipped B-24J Liberator. A trimetrogon arrangement of cameras were mounted in the nose (an additional window was fitted in the lower side of the nose for the lateral cameras of the trimetrogon cameras) and a pair of vertical cameras for stereo-photography were fitted in the aft bomb bay (a pair of windows were fitted in the aft bomb bay). The additional windows were the identifying features of the F-7A. The forward bomb bay carried additional fuel tanks while the aft bay was sealed shut to provide a compartment for the camera technicians and environmental systems that kept the cameras and long rolls of film at a constant temperature. Again, like the original F-7 variant, the full defensive armament was retained.

The first missions to map the CBI area commenced in March 1944 in support of the US Army Air Forces' Tenth and Fourteenth Air Forces- it was the Fourteenth Air Force under General Claire Chennault that replaced the original American Volunteer Group which was also known as the "Flying Tigers". In addition, the 24 CMS also flew missions mapping Burma in support of the British 14th Army. While provisionally based in India, the squadron sent detachments of aircraft to operate from forward bases in China as well as more remote parts of India closer to the Burmese border. At the time, the only heavy bomber group based in China was the 308th

Bombardment Group which flew B-24Js. The only logistical route for the support of the war effort in China came via the air route over the Himalayas called "The Hump". Frequently the B-24Js of the 308th BG had to be stripped of armament and fly their own bombs and fuel supplies from India over "Hump" to the bases in China. It usually took three "Hump" missions by a single B-24J to transport the bombs and fuel needed for it to fly a single mission from China against Japanese targets all along the Pacific Coast of China, Vietnam, and Malaya. The photo-mapping F-7As of the 24 CMS also flew their own transport missions over the "Hump", with 182 "Hump" crossings made in 1944, often at well above maximum gross takeoff weight. Six F-7As were lost on these transport missions alone in 1944.

Large areas of China lacked any maps at all, much to the frustration of the 308th BG. Many of the missions to map the interior of China were well over 2,500 miles in length. In addition, detailed mapping flights were made over Malaya (modern-day Malaysia), Vietnam, Thailand, and Burma. During the summer of 1944 the Japanese went on the offensive in central China to eliminate the forward bases of the 308th BG and numerous overflights of territory being contested were made to provide battlefield commanders accurate maps to blunt the Japanese offensive. Detailed maps were also made from overflights of all the Pacific ports of China that were being used by the Japanese to bring supplies to their forces in area. A less hazardous mission involved photo-mapping the entire supply routes from Allied bases in India over the "Hump" to Chinese forward bases. Air Transport Command's pilots benefited from a detailed map that covered a 50-mile wide strip from Calcutta all the way to Kunming in central China.

By 1945 the 24 CMS had mapped 455,000 square miles of territory in India, Burma, Thailand, and Malaya. An additional 435,000 square miles of China were also mapped. The greatest challenge in the area for the 24 CMS wasn't Japanese resistance as the F-7As operating singly or in pairs were usually left alone but the weather. An astounding 50% of the missions flown were unsuccessful because of bad weather in the areas to be mapped!

Just prior to the end of the Pacific War the 24 CMS had a forward detachment also based in Clark AB in the Philippines to assist with mapping of that nation as the last of the Japanese resistance was mopped up. Following the Japanese surrender, another detachment was established in Sydney, Australia, to assist the Australians with the mapping of the continent which lasted well into 1946. By that point, the unit was converting to the photo reconnaissance version of the B-29, the F-13A. The unit returned stateside in late 1947 to Hamilton AFB in California before being disbanded in 1953 at Lake Charles AFB, Louisiana

The H-21's at Sewart AFB in Tennessee were originally assigned to provide troop carrier support for the US Army. The USAF gave up that mission, and the troop carrier squadrons were replaced by the 24 and maybe a couple of other Helicopter Squadrons. This photo is of some of the original pilots that were assigned to the troop carrier mission in 1956. Top Row: Maj. James Fowler, Lt Carr Wilkerson, Lt Hank Alberg, Lt Dick Ground, Lt Fetcherman, Lt Bert Engles, Lt Skip Cowell, Capt Harry Rhoades, Lt Don Rhoades, Lt Johnson, Maj Hartley. Bottom: Capt Jess Lewis, Lt Keith Droegemeier, Lt Fred Wagner, Lt Harry Dunn, Lt Errin L. Schaeffer, Lt John Arthur, Lt ?,

Capt Ralph Searle, Capt "Pappy" Thompson, Capt Frank Gase. Photo and names by Keith Droegemeier.

Ron Mecklin was assigned to the 24 when it was first formed and shares these comments: I was a member of the 24 Helron in 1955 through 1959. Blackie Carney was CO of the unit. We were organized at Sewart AFB, Tenn. We got our 24 H-21B helicopters ready for a deployment to Japan in October 1956. Prior to that we flew our a/c to California to be made ready for shipment to Japan on a small carrier.

Once in Japan the squadron was broken into 4 detachments. My unit of 4 A/C went to Chitose AB on Hokkaido island. The other units were stationed at Nagoya, Johnson AB near Showa, and Itazuke. The headquarters detachment was located at Showa AB near Tachikawa. With the four detachments, we pretty well covered the country. Our detachment in Chitose supported the radar sites on the northern Island of Hokkaido. The Johnson AB detachment covered northern central Japan. Nagoya supported the south central area and Itazuke covered the sites around the southern part of Japan. I don't know how many sites each of those detachments supported. At Chitose we covered three radar sites primarily--with an occasional mission to other areas of need. Capt Dave King was our detachment commander--both at Chitose and later at Naha. The other original detachment pilots were Dick Ground and Floyd 'Lucky' Lockhart. The Squadron Maintenance Officer was Capt Frank Gase. The unit at Chitose was sent to Naha, Okinawa in April 1957. The Nagoya detachment included Capt John Alberti, Commander. Other pilots at Nagoya included Capt John Robbins, 1st Lt Sawyer White, 1st Lt Carr Wilkerson, 1st Lt John Casbergue, Lt Len Teague, Lt Bill Johnson and some others,

When we got to Naha, we were told that another detachment of our squadron had been formed at Eniwetok. Blackie was given Administrative command of the unit at Eniwetok, although I don't know how much active command he may have had. I'm sure some of the crew members from Eniwetok may have rotated into one of the 4 detachments of the 24 as some of the original members started rotating back to the states.

Before the October '56 deployment, some of these pilots were transferred to other units--one squadron that stayed in the US for some time and one that went to France. I don't have at my fingertips the listing of those that actually traveled to Japan on the carrier USS Corregidor--I know 1/Lt John Arthurs was added to the 24 before deployment, and I'm sure there were others as well.

While the concept of the helicopter coincides with man's first attempts to fly, the 24 Helicopter history goes back only to July 9th, 1956, when it was activated at Sewart AFB, Ten. Volunteer officers and airmen from the 516th Troop Carrier Group (RW) Assault, make up the personnel strength of the 24 Helicopter Squadron. This Group had proven its capabilities during such joint maneuvers as "Exercise Sagebrush" in Louisiana and "Exercise Pine Cone" at Southern Pines, North Carolina; in airlift of supplies to the DEW line in Alaska; and through many emergency relief missions. The Squadron was equipped with 18 H-21B helicopters. This aircraft, known as the "Work Horse," is considered by the USAF as relatively an "old timer" which has proven its

capability throughout the world. It is large enough and powerful enough to meet modern demands in payload, range and airspeed. When a call went out from Headquarters USAF for a helicopter squadron with a greater capability to transport supplies and personnel from bases in Japan to remote aircraft control and warning sites, the 24 was chosen.

Upon receipt of this order, the Squadron prepared its helicopters for movement to Sacramento Air Materiel Area, California. There the aircraft were "cocooned" and transported by barge down the Sacramento River to Alameda NAS. At this point, aircraft, equipment and personnel met for embarkation aboard the USS Corregidor, a Navy aircraft carrier. The Corregidor arrived at Yokosuka Naval Station on October 10. Since the Squadron's arrival at its Itami Air Base headquarters, the I11 officers and airmen have been busy unpacking and uncrating equipment, and de-cocooning the helicopters at Kisarazu Air Base, in preparation for its new mission. In addition to this primary task, the 24 has a secondary mission of providing rescue and aeromedical evacuation in conjunction with the search and air rescue facilities already established in Japan.

Although the 24 Helicopter Squadron is complete, much work and additional training will be given to add polish to the already experienced pilots and men prior to their readiness date. Further, the Squadron will have detachments situated at Chitose, Johnson, and Itazuke Air Bases to afford complete coverage. New helicopter operational theories are continually being explored under the leadership of the present commander, Major Francis M. Carney, who is continuing the pioneering in the helicopter field. The Squadron's motto, "Effectus Fides Sustinere," which means "Effective Reliable Support," sets the standard by which the Squadron will meet the problems of tomorrow.

In 1959 the 24 Helicopter Squadron was headquartered at Showa Air Base near Tokyo, Japan. It had detachments at Itazuke AB in Japan, Eniwetok Island in the Mariana Islands, and Naha Air Base in Okinawa. The squadron was equipped with H-21B helicopters with a checkerboard stripe on the fuselage and tail fins, and the tail section painted red.

E Flight at Eniwetok was commanded by Major Bob Lord and the Maintenance Officer was Capt. Dick Maznio. The Atomic tests had been finished, so the flight flew support missions for various scientific organizations. One of the supported organizations was working to develop a shark repellent. In the morning we would fly them up to one of the northern islands where they would descend in a steel shark cage to test the various repellents. We picked them up in the evening. I was one of six lieutenants from class 59D assigned in July 1959 fresh from the Helicopter Pilot school at Stead. Some of the others were Tom Schucat, Lt Davis, Quinten Staudt, and Duke Underwood.