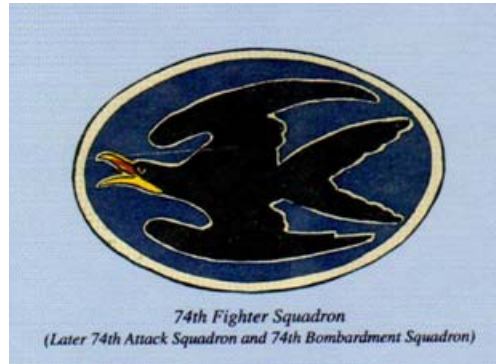


74th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON



LINEAGE

74th Aero Squadron organized, 22 Feb 1918

Demobilized, 28 Jan 1919

Organized, 17 Jun 1919

Demobilized, 25 Sep 1919

Reconstituted and consolidated (1936) with 74th Attack Squadron which was constituted, 18 Oct 1927

Redesignated 74th Pursuit Squadron, 8 May 1929

Activated, 1 Oct 1933

Redesignated 74th Attack Squadron, 1 Sep 1937

Redesignated 74th Bombardment Squadron, 1 Nov 1939

Redesignated 74th Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 6 Dec 1939

Redesignated 74th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 20 Nov 1940

Inactivated, 1 Nov 1946

Redesignated 135th Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 27 Mar 1951

Activated, 1 May 1951

Inactivated, 1 Dec 1952

STATIONS

Waco, TX, 22 Feb 1918

Call Field, TX, 1 Mar 1918

Hazelhurst Field, NY, 29 Jul 1918

Roosevelt Field, NY, Sep 1918

Garden City, NY, unkn-28 Jan 1919

Langley Field, VA, 17 Jun-25 Sep 1919

Albrook Field, CZ, 1 Oct 1933

Howard Field, CZ, 14 Jul 1941

Aguadulce, Panama, 8 Nov 1941

Rio Hato, Panama, 11 Dec 1941

Guatemala City, Guatemala, 9 Jan 1942
Rio Hato, Panama, 7 Apr 1944
Galapagos Islands, 21 Aug 1944
Aguadulce, Panama, 13 Feb 1945
Rio Hato, Panama, 1 May 1945-1 Nov 1946
March AFB, CA, 1 May 1951-1 Dec 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 1918-1919
16th Pursuit Group, 1 Oct 1933
6th Bombardment Group, 1 Feb 1940
40th Bombardment Group, 9 Aug 1942
6th Bombardment Group, 12 May 1943
VI Bomber Command, 1 Nov 1943-1 Nov 1946
106th Bombardment Group, 1 May 1951
106th Bombardment Wing, 16 Jun-1 Dec 1952

WEAPON SYSTEMS

DH-4
P-12
OA-3 1933-1937
B-6
Y10A-8 1937-1940
B-18, 1942-1943
A-17, 1942-1943
B-24, 1942-1946
B-29, 1951-1952

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

None

EMBLEM

On a blue oval bordered white, long axis horizontal, a frigate bird (*Fregata magnificens rothschildi* Matthews) volant proper fimbriated in white. (Approved, 23 Aug 1934)

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Presumably a tactical defense unit, 1918-1919. Goodwill flight to Guatemala, 7-12 Feb 1938. Antisubmarine patrols in the Pacific and Caribbean, 1941-1943. Replacement training, 1943-1945 and 1951-1952.

74th Attack Squadron (1927-29)
74th Pursuit Squadron (1929-37)
74th Attack Squadron (1937-39)
74th Bombardment Squadron (1937-41)

HQ-Fort Crockett, TX, 1927-33
Albrook Field, CZ, 1933-41

Constituted in the Regular Army on 18 October 1927 as the 74th Attack Squadron and allotted to the Eighth Corps Area. Concurrently organized with Organized Reserve personnel as a RAI unit at Fort Crockett, TX. Redesignated as the 74th Pursuit Squadron on 8 May 1929 and assigned to the 18th Pursuit Group. Organized Reserve officers assigned to the unit participated in summer training at Fort Crockett, TX, 1927-33 with elements of the 3rd Attack Group. Relieved from assignment to the 18th Pursuit Group on 15 July 1931 and assigned to the 20th Pursuit Group. Relieved from assignment to the 20th Pursuit Group on 15 June 1932 and assigned to the 16th Pursuit Group. Activated on 1 October 1933, less Reserve personnel, at Albrook Field, CZ. Consolidated in October 1936 with the 74th Aero Squadron (a WWI unit organized in February 1918 at Waco Field, TX; demobilized on 28 January 1919 at Garden City, NY; reconstituted in October 1936). Reorganized and redesignated 74th Attack Squadron on 1 September 1937. Reorganized and redesignated 74th Bombardment Squadron on 1 November 1939. Redesignated as the 74th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) on 6 December 1939. Relieved from assignment to the 16th Pursuit Group on 1 February 1940 and assigned to the 6th Bombardment Group. Location 7 December 1941—Albrook Field, CZ. Inactive in the U. S. Air Force as the 135th Bombardment Squadron (Medium).

Commanders, 74th Pursuit Squadron

74th Attack Squadron

74th Bombardment Squadron

Unknown** 12 Oct 27-1 Oct 33 Capt. John T. Sprague 21 Aug 36-11 Aug 38 1st Lt. Charles P.

Cabell 1 Oct 33-9 Aug 34 Capt. Edgar A. Sirmyer, Jr. 11 Aug 38-Feb 40 1st Lt. Charles H.

Deerwater 9 Aug 34-4 Dec 34 Capt. Richard T. King, Jr. Feb 40-Oct 41 Maj. Orrin L. Grover 4

Dec 34-21 Aug 36 Maj. Russell E. Randall Sep 40-Jan 41 Capt. Richard T. King, Jr. Jan 41-Oct

41 ** RAI commanders: Organized Reserve officers.

For two weeks starting 14 March 1938, 19th Wing pursuit pilots, based at Rio Hato, and bomber elements from France Field, based out of Aguadulce, once again engaged in aerial gunnery exercises, with the significant notation that one unit was designated as "Pursuit (Attack)", this the 74th Attack Squadron which, although it had been redesignated from Pursuit status on 1 September 1937, had yet to transition to Northrop A-17 monoplanes being mounted still on Boeing P-12's. By this time, the delighted bomber crews, flying the Martin B-10's, had learned how to completely outfox the much slower P-12's, and the Boeing pursuit pilots were chagrined to realize that the only aircraft they could attack with ease were the ancient Thomas-Morse O-19's of the Observation squadrons.

Although it had a full complement of 14 virtually brand-new Northrop A-17's, the 74th Attack Squadron had but three officers. In the two Pursuit Squadron, the 24th and 29th, although they had 24 P-26's dispersed equally between them (the P-36's could not yet be seriously included, as they were awaiting certain parts and transition training), one squadron had only four officers and the other five. Clearly, the Air Corps establishment in the Canal Zone would have been in serious trouble had the European war threatened it at this juncture.

As the end of the year approached, General Dargue arranged for the influx of new flying personnel to be distributed to the Bomber and Reconnaissance units and, in recognition of importance he attached to this element of his command, arranged to convert the 74th Attack Squadron to a Bombardment Squadron on 1 November 1939, trading most of its A-17's in on B-18's.

For a short while, the patrols projected in Field Order No. 1 of the Air Task Force were employed, featuring the long, hazardous searches seaward from David by the B-17's stationed there at the outset. Further developments in the patrol pattern were made possible when the 74th Bombardment Squadron (H) was ordered to Guatemala City on 2 January 1942, and when the 25th Bombardment Squadron (H) was ordered south to Salinas, Ecuador, on 21 January 1942.

Organizational and equipment changes during this period were hectic. In order to accomplish the plan as written, the 6th Bomb Group was ordered to move one B-17B squadron, supported by one flight of B-17E's, to Guatemala City, one B-18 squadron to Rio Hato, another to David, and one B-17E flight and squadron headquarters to Salinas. This order, which required extreme

flexibility amongst the crews of these units, did not actually affect the station of any unit except the 25th Bomb Squadron which, with four B-17E's, was ordered on short notice from Rio Hato, where they had just settled in, to barren Salinas, Ecuador as Task Force 3. Actual organizational equipment was changed somewhat, so that the 74th Bomb Squadron (formerly the 74th Pursuit and 74th Attack) at Guatemala City had six B-17B's and four B-17E's, while the historic 7th Reconnaissance Squadron at David was left with four B-18's and a single B-18 A. These sudden changes account for the relative lack of unit aircraft marking and accountability during this hectic period.

The 3rd Bomb Squadron had been assigned to the Galapagos Islands ("The Rock") in May 1942, an event of great importance, for it was the first time an Army four-engined squadron had actually been based on "The Rock." Now, at last, there was a strike force almost 1,000 miles seaward from Panama (a typical patrol screen employed by Bomber Command from its Guatemala, Salinas and Galapagos bases is shown in the Action chapter). During this period, the 74th Bomb Squadron at Guatemala City was reinforced by a detachment of 70 officers and men from the old, historical 7th Reconnaissance Squadron, which had been redesignated and had become the 397th Bomb Squadron.

A composite force termed Reconnaissance Task Force (Guatemala) (composed of, for the most part, a reinforced 74th Bombardment Squadron) was to make a daily radial search and patrol with three aircraft (B-18's at this point) of the sector 220° to 270° from Guatemala.

The unit which was designated as the 74th Bombardment Squadron on 1 November 1939 was none other than the former 74th Pursuit Squadron (which had been activated as such at Albrook Field on 1 October 1933) and the former 74th Attack Squadron which had fielded the Northrop A-17's which keep showing up scattered throughout Sixth Air Force from the brief dedicated "attack" concentration they enjoyed with this Squadron between 1 September 1937 and the time it became a bomber unit in 1939!

For our purposes here, we shall consider the Squadron from the time it was designated as the 74th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) at Albrook Field circa 5 March 1940.

By July 1940, the Squadron was well on its way towards the conversion to a "Medium" bomber outfit, and had completed an intensive encampment at Rio Hato that month, during which all six assigned pilots had flown some 214 hours. during this camp, 11 Enlisted Bombardiers were trained and, of this number, three qualified for 2nd and 3rd Class Bombardier ratings.

This unit all but ceased to exist as such (in spite of the apparent continuity of its designation) as, although the mission designator changed and actual bomber aircraft were assigned as early as 1939 (including B-18's 36-283 and 294), the unit also continued to operate some A-17's, at least one Sikorsky Y10A-8 and a Grumman OA-9 amphibian. This changed on 20 November 1940, when yet another redesignation took place. This time, the unit became known, once and for all, as the 74th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy).

Training and equipment changes followed, as the Squadron slowly divested of its former "skin" and, by May 1941, equipment on hand consisted almost entirely of B-18's (including 36-283 and 294) and shortly thereafter, on 14 July, the Squadron moved from its long-time base at Albrook to Howard Field (the orders read Fort Kobbe), in anticipation of receipt of its first Boeing B-17B the following month, which it operated alongside its four B-18's and single B-18A.

The Squadron moved from the relative comforts of Howard Field to Aguadulce on 8 November 1941 and, following the U.S. entry into the war, moved to Rio Hato on 11 December.

By 16 January 1942, the unit had been transformed, and found at Guatemala City, Guatemala, equipped with no fewer than six Boeing B-17B's and four B-17E's taken over and consolidated from other units (the strongest bomb unit in the Command at the time). Earlier that month, the "old" 74th had but six B-18's and one B-18A!

By the end of February 1942, with Pacific patrol activities at a peak, the unit now had all eight B-17B's in the Command, as well as the four B-17E's, but had also added one of the very first B-18B's to be converted, and one of the few to operate Pacific patrols. Despite these seemingly large numbers, the Squadron had but nine complete crews, all of whom had less than 12 months experience.

In August 1942, the Squadron was subordinated to the 40th Bombardment Group (it had formerly been assigned to the 6th Bombardment Group) and this assignment lasted until 12 May 1943.

Events had been transpiring that would alter the constitution of the Squadron. The 74th BS (H) that faced the first year of the war in Panama and the Pacific patrols was made up largely of "old" hands who had previously served with the unit, in some cases, when it was in its "Attack" configuration while others had joined that cadre from within the Command. , the "new" 74th was being formed in the U.S. at Salt Lake City, Utah, as early as February 1941 out of the former 11th Bombardment Squadron, and, unbeknownst to it, another element was being trained at Tucson, Arizona, from fragments of the 61st Bomb Squadron, which had originally been at Geiger Field, Washington. Late in November 1942, known only as "Squadron X," this package unit prepared for departure from New Orleans for the Canal Zone, which actually took place on 8 December. The men at New Orleans didn't have a clue regarding their destination, having been loaded on canvas covered trucks upon arrival at New Orleans and then transferred to a barracks where they were instructed to "write no letters, and make no 'phone calls." upon arrival at Howard Field, the unit was notified that it was to move again to Aguadulce, Panama and, there, it became known as the 29th Bombardment Squadron!

This is not the end of this bizarre chain of events. On 17 January 1943, the staff and advance echelon of the "new" unit at Aguadulce was flown to Guatemala City (the remainder of the unit arrived on the 22nd via boat) and, upon arriving, became known as the "new" 74th Bombardment Squadron and, a few days later, the "old" 74th moved out! If the reader is shell-shocked by this chain of events, consider the words of the Unit Historian of the "new" 74th: "The Historian could find no orders for the move to Guatemala City from Aguadulce or for the change

of designation from 29th to 74th Bombardment Squadron"! In any event, the crews of the "new" 74th took over the eight old B-17E's (one of which, apparently a true maintenance nightmare, was marked as "House of Gremlins") operated by the former unit, although these were soon augmented by, at first, one Consolidated B-24D.

The "new" 74th gradually gained cohesion and, on 12 May 1943, was detached from the 40th Bomb Group and once again reassigned to the 6th Bomb Group.

The flavor of these mid-war patrol operations may be sensed by an incident which occurred on 9 June 1943, when a 3rd Bomb Squadron B-17 crew stopped at Guatemala City incident to a ferry mission to Salinas, Ecuador. For the purposes of this mission (apparently the 3rd BS crew was not complete), a mixed 3rd BS/74 BS crew was aboard the aircraft because of a VI Bomber Command problem. The aircraft took off bound for Salinas with the mixed crew at 0530Hrs and, shortly thereafter, lost an engine and crashed at sea. The aircraft apparently blew up when it struck the water, and the entire crew was lost. Oddly, of the known B-17's in Sixth Air Force, none are listed as lost this date, and it must be assumed that the aircraft was on delivery to the 3rd BS at Salinas from the U.S. and had not as yet been taken on to Sixth Air Force records.

At this point, the Squadron had nearly completed transition to the B-24D, and had eight of the "Liberators" on hand, although one B-17E was still available, as was a single Northrop RA-17.

By October 1943, the 74th was the only Sixth Air Force tactical unit still operating from Guatemala City and, the following month, ended its association with the 6th Bomb Group, when that organization was disbanded. It subsequently fell directly under VI Bomber Command. By 31 December 1943, strength had stabilized completely on B-24D's and 11 were on hand (of which nine were combat ready).

When the Germans again managed to send a few U-boats back to the Caribbean in early 1944, several 74th BS crews were hastily dispatched to France Field to join in the rather frantic search for these intruders. One crew member, Dick Hogg, remembers trying to take off in his B-24 from "a runway built for B-18's and B-25's I'll bet those palm trees haven't grown back yet!" He went on to report that, "it never made the headlines, but a German sub was sunk during that operation."

The rather lengthy deployment to Guatemala City (coastal airfield at San Jose, Guatemala, where, according to Glenn "Tom" Conway, "I was surprised to find that, every time I landed, everybody was standing around with a coconut in their hand...until I later found out that the coconuts were filled with rum!"), finally ended in April 1944, and the unit was reassigned to Rio Hato, Panama, although the ground echelon arrived there via New France Field, where some of the veterans were apparently flown by transport, and then on to Rio Hato (via truck), with a number of new arrivals as well. The personnel complement altered somewhat during this interlude, and the period between April and August, when the unit moved again to the remote Galapagos, was spent in training and some sporadic patrol activity to prepare the "new guys" for the long hours and difficult conditions expected on "The Rock." The time was also invested in welcoming 12 new Consolidated B-24J's into the unit although just prior to the 21 August move, at least eight of the old B-24D's were also still on hand.

The move to "The Rock" accomplished, the unit settled down to the never ending patrol cycle and managed a respectable 75% "in commission" status amongst its 12 B-24J's there (including 44-41002 and 41003). "Tom" Conway summed up the move to the Galapagos "after living the soft life for so long at Guatemala and Rio Hato, the dugout latrines and distilled water baths cramped our style. Drinking water at the mess hall looked like iced tea because of all of the red volcanic dust that settled everywhere."

The tour in the Galapagos was rather shorter than some other bomb squadrons that had served there, and the unit returned to Aguadulce, Panama, on 13 February 1945 after only some seven months. In the meantime, in November 1944, five complete combat crews were called home to the states and, later, ended up in the South Pacific, where their training with the 74th paid big dividends. Upon arrival at Aguadulce, two old B-24D's were assigned (although some refurbishment of these had been undertaken at the PAD) and these served alongside the 10 remaining B-24J's. Then, in May, the Squadron moved to Rio Hato once again and, the following month, could boast a combined strength of 14 aircraft, including 10 veteran B-24J's, three brand new B-24M's and one B-24D.

430104	B-17E	41-9040	74BS	40BG		LAC	Marshall, W	Galapagos AB
430611	B-24D	41-23664	74BS	6BG		LAS	Cook, M R	San Jose, Guatemala/off
430616	B-24D	41-23775	74BS			MAC	Lowe, Wayne (NMI)	San Jose/ 20mi N
440131	B-24D	41-23676	74BS			KCR	Cline, Stewart P	San Jose
441218	B-24J	44-41007	74BS			TOA	Arnold, Laurell I	
450209	B-24J	44-40891	74BS			LAC	Arnold, Laurell I	David Aux Fld
450830	B-24J	44-41001	74BS		Rio Hato AF	GAC	Falkner, Joseph E	Rio Hato AF
451120	C-45F	43-35772	74BS		Rio Hato AAB/PAN	GMACB	Keller, Robert C	Rio Hato AAB
420928	B-17E	41-9036	74BS	40BG	Guatamala City, GUA	KCRGC	Sieferman, August C	Fraijanes, GUA

421028	B-17E	41-2544	74BS	40BG	Guatamala City, Guatamala	LAC	Miller, Floyd B	Guatamala City, Guatamala
421211	B-24D	41-23924	74BS	40BG	Guatamala City, Guatamala	LAC	Thrift, John C	Guatamala City, Guatamala
410404	B-18	36-294	74BS	6BG	Albrook Field, CZ	TAC	Conant, Hiram F	Albrook Field, CZ
410724	B-18	36-295	74BS	6BG	Howard Field, CZ	LAC	Jones, R. J.	Rio Hato, PAN
420119	RB-17B	38-220	74BS	6BG	Howard Field, CZ	FLEFF	Blasé, George H	San Jose, GUA
420214	B-17B	38-266	74BS	6BG	Guatemala City, GUA	FLEFGL	Robinson, Raymond E	2 mi NW of Comfort, TX
421127	B-17E	41-2448	74BS	6BG	Guatamala City, Guatamala	TAC	Blasé, George H	Guatamala City, Guatamala
391212	OA-9	38-572	74BS		Albrook Field, CZ	LAC	Darcy, Thomas C	Tigre Island, San Blas, CZ
400229	OA-4C	33-295	74BS		Albrook Field, CZ	LAC	Gilkeson, Adlai H	Albrook Field, CZ
410822	B-18	36-300	74BS		Howard Field, CZ	TAC	Crane, Jack J	Howard Field, CZ
410829	B-18A	37-633	74BS		Howard Field, CZ	TAC	Werner, Wesley	Howard Field, CZ

391003	OA-9	38-572	74AtkSq		Albrook Field, CZ	LAC	Randall, Russell E.	Gatun Lake, CZ
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340128	P-12B	30-52	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	FLEFNU	Borchers, Adrian	Aguadulce, PAN
341026	P-12B	30-36	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LACNO	Mallory, Joel E.	France Field, CZ
341205	OA-3	32-283	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LAC	Coutlee, M. J.	Albrook Field, CZ

350129	P-12B	30-44	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LACNO	Jackson, Nelson P.	France Field, CZ
350623	P-12E	32-75	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	FLEF	Jackson, Nelson P.	Los Santos, PAN
351120	OA-3	32-283	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	FLEF	Armstrong, Frank A	Ocu, PAN
360116	OA-3	32-283	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LAC	Scott, Robert L., Jr	Panama Bay, PAN
360319	P-12F	32-89	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	TAC	Jacson, Nelson P.	Aguadulce, PAN
360509	P-12E	32-54	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LACGC	Cousland, Cornelius W	David, PAN
360509	P-12E	32-9	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	LACGC	Collar, Gilbert T	David, PAN
361022	P-12E	32-11	74PS		Albrook Field, CZ	MACB	Brown, James W, Jr	Albrook Field, CZ

Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 24 May 2011
Updated:

Sources