

2 FIGHTER SQUADRON (COMMANDO)



MISSION

LINEAGE

2 Fighter Reconnaissance Squadron constituted, 11 Apr 1944
Activated, 20 Apr 1944
Redesignated 2 Fighter Squadron (Commando), 2 Jun 1944
Inactivated, 12 Nov 1945
Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

STATIONS

Lakeland AAFld, FL, 20 Apr 1944
Cross City AAFld, FL, 9 Jun 1944
Alachua AAFld, FL, 21 Jun 1944
Drew Field, FL, 17 Aug 1944
Lakeland AAFld, FL, 22 Aug-29 Oct 1944
Kalaikunda, India, 15 Dec 1944
Cox's Bazar, India, 13 Feb 1945
Kalaikunda, India, 14 May-22 Oct 1945
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 11-12 Nov 1945

ASSIGNMENTS

Third Air Force, 20 Apr 1944
2 Air Commando Group, 22 Apr 1944-12 Nov 1945

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-51, 1944-1945

F-6, 1945

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Roger R. Pryor

Maj William Grosvenor

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Central Burma

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

Bangkok, Thailand, 15 Mar 1945

EMBLEM

Over and through a light turquoise blue disc, a caricatured, brown eagle with yellow beak and feet, diving through space toward dexter base, wearing a GI helmet with orange straps, holding a commando knife, proper in the beak and grasping and firing a black "Tommy" gun in the talons all emitting speed lines to rear. (Approved, 3 Aug 1945)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 2 Fighter Squadron, Commando under command of LTC Roger C. Pryor arrived at Cox's Bazar Airdrome on 12 Feb 1945, and due to the fine advance work of the 327th Airdrome Squadron and Group Headquarters personnel were able to commence operations only two days later.

12 Feb Lt. Williams, Engineering Officer, with 25 crew chiefs and two clerks departed for Cox's Bazaar. Lt. Carter, Communications Officer, and a small group greeted them.

13 Feb The remainder of the squadron, 105 enlisted men and 33 officers was flown to Cox's Bazaar.

The pilots were briefed in Group Operations the evening of 13 Feb for their first combat mission on 14 Feb to bomb a small island in the Irrawaddy River south of Pikokku in support of the 14th Army's drive on Meiktila. Majs Pryor and Grosvenor lead our formation. The entire mission went off with clock-like precision.

Two hundred seventy-seven combat sorties were flown between 14 Feb and 1 Mar.

On 22 Feb four pilots and crew chief were sent to Sinthe at British request to patrol for Japanese planes. They were there for ten days, sleeping in tents, and supplied by L-5s and a C-64.

25 Feb Two pilots were forced down over enemy territory Cpt Atha and Lt Beck. Both returned with only Lt. Beck sustaining injuries. Lt. Beck's plane was hit with 20mm fire. He was forced to jump, and upon impact suffered a sprained ankle and bruises on the arm and legs. Cpt Atha returned to base immediately and guided an L-5 (piloted by Maj Charles Gordon of the First Fighter Squadron) to Lt Beck's position where he was picked up two hours after parachuting. Lt. Beck was awarded the Purple Heart Medal. On that same day on a later mission Cpt Atha had an oil leak and had to bail out. He spent the night wrapped in his parachute camouflaged by brush. British ground troops picked him up fifteen hours later.

On 15 Mar Commando P-51s struck Don Muang Air Field near Bangkok at high noon and they found that the Japanese had concentrated well over a hundred planes on the field. Buildings, planes, Japs, rice and sake went with the wind as the Mustangs made pass after pass.

The Don Muang effort capped a month of varied activities. The early part of the month saw us winding up our ground support for the 4th Corps of the British 14th Army in its drive on Meiktila from the Nyaungu beachhead. During this period, the Squadron worked under VCP control for ground support, provided air cover for transport, sorties into newly-captured Meiktila and lashed out at Jap lines of communications as well as en-gaging in some counter-air force activities on airfield sweeps and escort of heavies over Rangoon area targets. The end of one ground support commitment started a new, if brief one, when the Squadron flew in support of the Letpan landings in the Arakan.

On the successive days, the 20th and 21st, following airfield sweeps into Thailand and lower Burma, Major Pryor and Lt. Gilliam were forced to make emergency landings on the respective days. Major Pryor's was a dead stick landing with a 35 mph cross wind throwing his calculations off. He landed short, wiped out his gear and almost caught fire when his left wing tank spread a sheet of flame along the runway. Lt. Gilliam, sustaining damage in elevator and rudder controls from enemy groundfire at Hmawbi, spun from 10,000 to 4,000 feet over the field as he attempted to lower his flaps and gear. He tried unsuccessfully to bail out, eventually managed to bring his ship under control and made a belly landing safely at Cox's Bazaar.

Enemy ground fire crippled us badly during sweeps of Hmawbi and Mingaladon airfields on the 26th. Major Roger C. Pryor was hit and forced to bail out in enemy territory. He was seen to be OK on the ground, but at month's end there is still no word as to the safety or whereabouts of our Squadron Commander, who is respected, loved and missed by every member of his outfit. We are confident that he will return to us, but waiting is hard. Maj William Grosvenor became CO of the 2nd Fighter Squadron March 26, 1945.

In addition to counter air force strikes, the 2nd Squadrons escorted bombers on missions to Rangoon, Moulmein, Bangkok, etc., engaged in extensive bridge busting on the route from Meiktila

to Rangoon, and made life miserable for the Japs engaged in motor, rail, and river transport all over South Burma.

At Moulmein Lt. Charles LeFan was hit by enemy ground fire causing an oil leak which almost completely covered his canopy, but he was brought to Akyab and "talked in" for a successful landing by Captain Albert Abraham, his flight leader.

On the following day, 27 Mar, while on return to home base from an escort mission to Bangkok, Lt. Robert H. Morris was killed in action when his plane crashed at Payama, 30 miles southeast of Ramree Island. No cause is known, but flames were seen to be coming from behind his head, he pulled the canopy, rolled over to the left and dove straight into the ground. His flight leader called him several times to bail out, but to no avail. Quiet, unassuming, warm-hearted "Harry" Morris will be remembered as a good friend by all.

Normal activities were the order of the day. Lots of long hours and hard work, bitter bitches about the mess - which never seems to respond to treatment - and movies at the Stardust theater three times a week with an orientation program on Monday nights. Mail comes, but too infrequently for all of the 33 officers and 109 men concerned. Captain Albert Abraham, Flight Leader was forced to bail out after being hit by ground fire during a fighter sweep deep in Siam. Captain Abraham's flight was one of the last of 40 ships to hit Don Muang Airfield. The ground defenses were thoroughly alerted by that time. "Abe" pulled up and bailed out about ten miles from the field. He was seen to be OK on the ground and we have every reason to believe that he will be able to take care of himself.

Lt. Roy H. Long, Jr., was killed in action on 28 Apr 1945 while on a low level attack against enemy torpedo boats near Amherst Point on the Gulf of Martaban. These elusive craft, taken from the Dutch by the Japs in 1941 were a prime target and one long sought in this theater. When finally flushed out by our flights, the attack was pressed home. "Hank" was apparently hit by enemy defensive fire, his plane hitting the water and disintegrated

On 29 Apr 1945 the squadron attack east of Pegu where the Japs had concentrated all their remaining equipment for the trek to Moulmein. The P-51s not only destroyed tankettes, trains, locomotives, AA guns, cars and trucks, but blew up the Japs only fuel dump. When the British ground troops arrived the next day they found hundreds of vehicles abandoned and the Japs dispersed. Without taking a breather the fighters returned again and again to Siam; striking such strategic fields as Ban-Takli, Chiangmai, Koke Katheim, Khoga, Nakorn Pathon, Nakorn Sawan, and Phre.

The last day of Apr 1945 became the best day by far when at 2100 we received a telephone call that Lt. Col. Roger Pryor, Squadron Commander missing in action since 26 Mar, was alive and well. He was rescued from his guards near Pegu after the Japanese abandoned Rangoon and within 24 hours was flown back to India by the Group Commander, Col DeBolt in a B-25. This electrifying news swept through the Squadron and entire Group to give morale the biggest boost in a long, long time.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 8 Mar 2012

Updated: 27 Oct 2023

Sources

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