

## **25<sup>th</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (MEDIUM)**



### **LINEAGE**

25<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Heavy) constituted, 22 Dec 1939  
Activated, 1 Feb 1940  
Redesignated 25<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Medium), May 1942  
Disbanded, 20 Jun 1944

### **STATIONS**

Langley Field, VA, 1 Feb-26 Oct 1940  
Borinquen Field, PR, 1 Nov 1940  
Edinburgh Field, Trinidad, 1 Nov 1942  
Ft Amsterdam, Curacao, 1 Aug 1943  
Borinquen Field, PR, 5 Oct 1943-24 Mar 1944  
Alamogordo AAFld, NM, 6 Apr-20 Jun 1944

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Second AF

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

A-17  
B-18  
A-20, 1942-1943  
B-25, 1943-1944  
B-17

### **COMMANDERS**

Maj Theodore J. Koenig, 1 Feb 1940  
Maj. William B. Souza 1 Oct 40-6 Jan 41  
LTC Caleb V. Haynes, 7 Jan 1941  
Maj Alva L. Harvey, 1 Jun 1941  
Maj Neil B. Harding, 10 Sep 1941  
Maj Jasper N. Bell, unkn  
LTC Robert Alan, unkn  
Maj Mathew J. McKeever Jr., unkn

Maj Milton E. Lipps, unkn  
Maj Howard A. Cheney, unkn  
Col Charles F. Born, 1942  
Maj John J. Mullen, unkn  
Col Kenneth O. Sanborn, 1 Aug 1943-7 Apr 1944  
Unkn, Apr-Jun 1944

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

Antisubmarine, American Theater

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

Azure, issuing out of sinister side an arm embowed grasping a trident bend sinisterwise prongs to base or, on and over the junction of the shaft and prongs a compass rose of the first on a background of the second. (Approved 3 Oct 1940)

## **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

## **MOTTO**

GUARD WITH POWER

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

Flew antisubmarine patrols, escorted convoys, and served as part of the defense force of the area.

1940

In early November, Borinquen's strength increased rapidly as new units arrived. The 13th Composite Wing, commanded by Brig. Gen. Follett Bradley, arrived from Langley Field. The 25th Bombardment Group, with its 10th, 12th and 35th Bombardment Squadrons, arrived from Langley. The 27th Reconnaissance Squadron, already at the field, was attached to the 25th Group for control purposes. The balance of the 24th Air Base Group, with its 23rd Air Base Squadron, 33rd Materiel Squadron, and 34th Materiel Squadron, arrived at the same time from Kelly Field.

On November 3rd, the air echelon of the 25th Bombardment Group, 14 B-18A aircraft, 2 A-17 aircraft, 32 officers and 44 enlisted men, all arrived at the base from Langley Field. 1940

Throughout 1941, changes in base forces occurred rapidly. The 13th Composite Wing moved to San

Juan in January (reason unknown). On April 1st, the 25th Bombardment Group and its units were split down the middle to form the 40th Bombardment Group and the 29th, 44th, and 45th Bombardment Squadrons and 5th Reconnaissance Squadron. And then, on the 25th of April, the 13th Composite Wing returned to Borinquen Field. Borinquen Field came under the jurisdiction of Caribbean Air Force on May 1st, and the Hq, Caribbean Interceptor Command, was established at the base.

In a major move, on September 18th, the VI Bomber Command, established elsewhere, assumed control over the 25th and 40th Bombardment Groups and the 5th and 27th Reconnaissance Squadrons. On October 25th, the 13th Composite Wing was inactivated, its personnel being absorbed by the new Hq & Hq Sq, VI Interceptor Command, established at the same time to replace the Caribbean Interceptor Command, also discontinued. By October 30th, the 35th Bomb Squadron (25th Bomb Group) moved to another base, while, two weeks later, on November 12th, the 12th Bomb Squadron (25th Bomb Gp) also moved to another base.

By June 6, 1942, the 25th Air Depot Group had arrived at the base from Brookley Field, Ala. Its mission was to maintain and repair aircraft for the entire Antilles region, including transient aircraft. This was one day before the 40th Bombardment Group, with its 29th, 44th, 45th and 395th Bombardment Squadrons left the base for operations elsewhere. On Sept. 21st, the 417th Bombardment Squadron (25th Bomb Gp) moved to another base and on October 31st, the 25th Bombardment Group and 10th Bombardment Squadron also moved to another base for operations.

The 64th Ferrying Squadron was activated at the base on November 6th, replacing the existing 23rd Ferrying Squadron. The new unit absorbed the personnel of the old one, as well as excess personnel of the 25th Bombardment Group.

25th Bombardment Group Constituted as the 25th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 22 December 1939 but not activated (at Langley Field, Virginia) until 1 February 1940, this new Group was destined to spend virtually its entire existence in the Antilles.

Following rather sporadic training at Langley Field on early Boeing B-17's, these were flown to the West Coast and exchanged for older Douglas B-18's and early model Northrop A-17's, and the group transferred lock, stock and barrel from Langley to Puerto Rico commencing 26 October 1940, the surface echelon arriving at San Juan in relatively good cheer (although somewhat crowded) aboard the US AT Hunter Liggett on 31 October.

The air echelon arrived at the building Borinquen Field on 3 November 1940, two days after the ground troops, and consisted of 14 fairly low-time Douglas B-18A's (37-464,465, 478,479, 514, 516, 532, 547, 548, 565, 567, 568, 587 and 601) and two Northrop A-17's (35-59 and 35-95), a "typical" pre-war Group complement. As of this date, the Group consisted of the 10th Bomb Squadron, 12th Bomb Squadron and 35th Bomb Squadrons (q. v.) and the Group was nominally an element of the 13th Composite Wing from 31 December 1940. Up until the entry of the U.S. into the war, these units sported the following cowling color-code arrangement:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron = checkered
- 35th Bomb Squadron = red
- 10th Bomb Squadron = yellow
- 12th Bomb Squadron = white

Although Group strength reached 57 officers and 818 enlisted men by 31 January 1941, this was diluted considerably in April when cadres from the Group were transferred to form the 40th Bombardment Group (M) .

Although elements of the Group operated up and down the Antilles chain as the new bases were being developed, it wasn't until 27 October 1941 that the 35th Bomb Squadron finally departed for Antigua, BWI, some 300 air miles to the east-southeast of San Juan, with its entire on-hand strength of four B-18A's. The 12th Bomb Squadron departed the same day for Benedict Field on St. Croix, although its air element of four B-18A's did not arrive until 12 November, leaving the Group headquarters and the 10th Bomb Squadron at Borinquen with six B-18A's, a single Curtiss P-36A and one Northrop A-17A. It is interesting to note that the Group was actually authorized 27 Consolidated B-24's at this time, but these were not available for issue.

Shortly before the U.S. entry into the war, all effective 25th Bomb Group aircraft were marshaled on Antigua with the 35th Bomb Squadron where they were to serve as the strike force to be used against the Vichy French island of Martinique.

Although the "thorn in the side" represented by the French forces in being in the French islands continued to be a matter of concern to units of the Group, upon the U.S. entry into the war, to the 25th Bomb Group fell the great bulk of the active antisubmarine duties carried out by the USAAC in the Caribbean during the first year of our war.

The Group was to suffer Caribbean Air Force's first wartime casualty when, on 11 December 1941, a B-18A piloted by 1LT M. Miller of the 10th Bomb Squadron was reported "lost in action" over the Caribbean with the loss of all hands. Oddly, although the author has examined every single Individual Aircraft History Card for B-1 SA's, no trace of this loss could be found. The Group was, by war's end, officially credited with two submarine kills. Another aircraft was also lost in action, from the 417th Bomb Squadron. Group strength had fallen dangerously low by this time totaling not more than 10 B-1 SA's, the P-36A and A-17A and another fixed-gear A-17, although its "authorized" strength still should have consisted of 27 B-24's!

The long, six hour over-water missions slowly but surely started to take their toll on the Group's veteran aircraft. B-18A 37-479 crashed at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico on 25 February 1942 (although the crew survived) and, three days later, one of the two Group Northrop A-17's (35-95) was lost when it ran into a car on the unfinished runway at Borinquen in a driving rain, although the pilot survived.

The Group could count five B-18A's, two B-18's and one A-17 by 15 February 1942 (not counting the aircraft of the remote 35th Bomb Squadron) of which 1 B-18A, 1 B-18 and the A-17 were not airworthy for one reason or another, but it had 22 combat crews, of whom 75% had more than 12 months experience. The Group was short six navigators. It should also be noted that, as of the outbreak of war, the Group had at least three enlisted bombardiers.

As the toll of continuous operations continued to mount, some relief was received on 3 March 1942 when the 27th Reconnaissance Squadron (H) was assigned to the Group (although it had been Attached to the group as early as 25 September 1941, this unit being redesignated as the 417th Bomb Squadron on 7 May 1942). The Group was formally re-designated as the 25th Bombardment Group (M) on 7 May also.

As Borinquen Field became more crowded as the war progressed, and as the bulk of the units squadrons were operating by then far to the south, Group Headquarters was moved to Edinburgh Air Base, Trinidad on 1 November 1942, together with the 10th Bomb Squadron (although with only a few of its original personnel, as, at this point, its designation was bestowed upon the personnel of the former 1st Bomb Squadron of the 9th Bomb Group (H), which has caused no end of confusion to historians of the subject). The "official" Group history alleges that the Group enjoyed the attachment of the 80th Bomb Squadron from November 1942, although this unit was redesignated as the 9th Antisubmarine Squadron on 29 November 1942 and its attachment to the 25th Bomb Group lasted only until March 1943. This unit was equipped with the ubiquitous B-18.

At the same time that these wartime expansion personnel gymnastics were going on, the Group's 35th Bomb Squadron was also reorganized at Zandery Field (with a Detachment at Atkinson Field, British Guiana), the personnel for the newly reconstituted squadron being obtained from the 99th and 430th Bomb Squadrons of the 9th Bomb Group (H). During the ensuing months, the 10th and 35th Bomb Squadrons were, for all intents and purposes, under the operational control of Trinidad Detachment, VI Fighter Command (later Antilles Air Task Force and VI Fighter Command). The 417th Bomb Squadron was controlled directly by Antilles Air Task Force and VI Fighter Command (later redesignated Antilles Air Command, this Squadron not being formally assigned to the Group until 25 February 1944!) while the other Group squadron, the 12th Bomb Squadron, was attached to the Curacao Detachment, Antilles Air Task Force and VI Fighter Command. For all intents and purposes, as may be guessed, 25th Bomb Group headquarters had by this time become little more than an administrative headquarters.

Group Headquarters moved once again from Edinburgh Air Base to the Naval Operating Base, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad on 8 December 1942 (when it effectively assumed the responsibilities of the short-lived XXXVI Fighter Command) and, from there, to St. Clair Cantonment, Port-of-Spain on 6 June 1943. This was short-lived, as it moved again, lock, stock and barrel, back to Edinburgh on 15 June! Group Headquarters was finally settled in, on 1 August 1943, at Fort Amsterdam, Curacao, although detachments remained at Edinburgh, Dakota and Hato Fields.

As the continuing command and control dilemma continued to evolve in the region, the Group Headquarters returned to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico on 5 October 1943, being followed by its small Trinidad Detachment on 13 October.

On 10 December 1943, the Group's 10th Bomb Squadron was sent on Temporary Duty (TDY) to 6th Bomber Command in Panama but was later reassigned to that command. The Group, by this time, was for all intents and purposes defunct, and was returned to the CONUS (at least on paper) 24 March 1944 to Alamogordo AAF, NM.

During its last year of existence, the Group added the veteran 59th Bomb Squadron (L) to its roster by attachment on 26 April 1943 (although it remained under the operational control of a Detachment of the Antilles Air Task Force, this Attachment ending 1 August 1943), by which time most of its squadrons had been re-equipped with North American B-25D's and B-25G's. The 59th Bomb Squadron (M) was, finally, actually assigned to the Group on 11 October 1943. By the end of 1943, Group HHS had finally lost its old B-18's and now flew only two Cessna C-78 "Bobcats."

#### 25th Bombardment Group (M)

Patrol #1 - Continuous daylight patrol of one aircraft over the Mona Passage (between the Dominican Republic and the western extremes of Puerto Rico)

Patrol #2 - Daily reconnaissance flight of one aircraft 30 miles seaward along the north coast of the Dominican Republic to Cape Isabella

Patrol #3 - Daily reconnaissance flight of one aircraft over the area south of Puerto Rico for a distance of 50 miles seaward, between longitudes 64°50' West and 68°30' West

Patrol #4 - Airplanes based at St. Croix were to make a daily reconnaissance flight of one aircraft over the area between Latitudes 17°00' North and 18° 10' North and between Longitudes 64°50' West and 62°00' West

Patrol #5 - Airplanes based at Antigua were to make a daily reconnaissance with one aircraft over the area between Latitudes 16°10' North and 15°40' North and between Longitudes 62°00' West and 60°50' West

Constituted in the Regular Army on 22 December 1939 as Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 25th Bombardment Group (Heavy). Activated on 1 February 1940 at Langley Field, VA. Ground elements departed from Fort Monroe, VA, on 27 October 1940 on an army transport and arrived 2 November 1940 at San Juan, PR. Aircraft and crews departed Langley Field on 1 November 1940 for Borinquen Field, PR, and arrived several days later. Location 7 December 1941—Borinquen Field, PR. Inactive in the U. S. Air Force as the 25th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing.

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Air Force Order of Battle  
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Sources