

31 TEST AND EVALUATION SQUADRON



MISSION

The 31 Test and Evaluation Squadron evaluates the operational effectiveness and suitability of advanced ACC weapon systems by providing operations, maintenance and engineering experts to work alongside Air Force Materiel Command and Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center personnel. Current operational test and evaluation programs involve the B-52, B-1, B-2, F-22 Joint Strike Fighter, RQ-4 Global Hawk, MQ-9 Reaper, and the Airborne Laser. Squadron personnel integrate live test results with modeling and simulation data to predict combat capabilities under realistic scenarios, setting the stage for the development of new Combat Air Force tactics. Results and conclusions support DoD acquisition, deployment and employment decisions.

LINEAGE

31 Aero Squadron organized, 13 Jun 1917

Demobilized, 14 Apr 1919

Reconstituted and redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron, 24 Mar 1923

Activated, 1 Apr 1931

Redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 6 Dec 1939

Redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 20 Nov 1940

Redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 6 Mar 1944

Redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, 30 Apr 1946

Inactivated, 10 Mar 1947

Redesignated 31 Reconnaissance Squadron, Very Long Range, Photographic, 16 Sep 1947

Activated, 20 Oct 1947

Redesignated 31 Reconnaissance Squadron, Very Long Range, Photo, RCM, 23 Dec 1947

Redesignated 31 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Photographic, 16 Jun 1949
Redesignated 31 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Heavy, 16 Nov 1950
Redesignated 31 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 1 Oct 1955
Discontinued and inactivated, 1 Feb 1963
Redesignated 31 Test and Evaluation Squadron, 12 Feb 1986
Activated, 1 Jul 1986

STATIONS

Camp Kelly, TX, 13 Jun-11 Aug 1917
Etampes, France, 19 Sep 1917
Issoudun, France, 23 Sep 1917
Bordeaux, France, 6 Jan-18 Mar 1919
Mitchel Field, NY, 5-14 Apr 1919
March Field, CA, 1 Apr 1931
Hamilton Field, CA, 5 Dec 1934
Hickam Field, TH, 8 Feb 1938
Kipapa, TH, 23 May 1942
Kualoa, TH, 9 Sep-9 Nov 1942
Espiritu Santo, 30 Nov 1942
Guadalcanal, 17 Jan 1943 (operated from Munda, New Georgia, 2 Feb-13 Mar 1944)
Momote Airfield, Los Negros, 20 Apr 1944
Wakde, 20 Aug 1944
Noemfoor, 26 Sep 1944
Morotai, 16 Oct 1944
Samar, 17 Mar 1945
Clark Field, Luzon, Dec 1945-10 Mar 1947
Yokota AB, Japan, 20 Oct 1947
Kadena Field, Okinawa, 16 Mar 1949
Yokota AB, Japan, 12 Jul 1950
Johnson AB, Japan, 14 Aug-16 Nov 1950
Travis AFB, CA, 16 Nov 1950
Beale AFB, CA, 18 Jan 1960-1 Feb 1963
Edwards AFB, CA, 1 Jul 1986

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 13 Jun-Sep 1917
Third Aviation Instruction Center, Sep 1917-Jan 1919
Unkn, Jan-14 Apr 1919
7 Bombardment Group, attached on 1 Apr 1931, assigned on 30 Jun 1931
5 Composite (later, 5 Bombardment; 5 Reconnaissance) Group, 1 Feb 1938-10 Mar 1947
71 Reconnaissance Group, 20 Oct 1947
Fifth Air Force (attached to 71st Reconnaissance Group), 18 Aug 1948
Thirteenth Air Force, 16 Mar 1949
311 Air Division, 1 Apr 1949

Second Air Force, 1 Nov 1949
5 Strategic Reconnaissance Group, 1 Dec 1949
5 Strategic Reconnaissance (later, 5 Bombardment) Wing, 16 Jun 1952
4126 Strategic Wing, 1 Oct 1959-1 Feb 1963
Strategic Air Command, 1 Jul 1986
USAF Air Warfare Center, 1 Jun 1992
79 (later, 53) Test and Evaluation Group, 15 Apr 1993

ATTACHMENTS

Far East Air Forces, Dec 1949-16 Nov 1950
5 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, 10 Feb 1951-15 Jun 1952
5 Bombardment Wing, 2 Oct 1959-18 Jan 1960

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-3A
B-4A
O-19B
O-38B
B-10B
Y1B-4
YB-12A
B-12
B-17
B-29
B-52

COMMANDERS

Capt Earle G. Harper, 1 Apr 1931
Capt Devereaux Myers, 14 Oct 1931
Capt Earle G. Harper, 2 Nov 1931
Capt Harold W. Beaton, 1 Dec 1931
1st Lt Ralph A. Snavely, 29 Jun 1932
Maj Harold D. Smith, 6 Jan 1934
Maj James G. Taylor, 16 Nov 1936
Capt Walter R. Agee, 11 Jan 1939
Capt Hugh F. McCaffery, 6 Mar 1940
Capt Russell L. Waldron, 4 Mar 1941
Lt Col Rhudy, 23 Dec 1941
Maj Carmichael, 2 Feb 1942
Capt Blakey, 10 Feb 1942
Maj Rutledge, 24 Mar 1942
Maj George Glober, 21 Jun 1942
Maj Francis T. Brady, 30 Mar 1943
Maj Morris W. Slack, 17 Jun 1943

Lt Col Joseph Reddoch, 6 Aug 1943
Maj John F. Britton, 4 Sep 1943
Maj Francis E. Riggs, 10 Dec 1943
Maj John Henry Kissner, 31 Dec 1943
Capt William Fallin, 28 May 1944
Capt George T. Davis, 28 Jul 1944
Maj Everett Rowe, 5 Jan 1945
Capt Everett Thurlow, 4-26 Apr 1945
Lt Col Earle L. Hehn, Jr.
Lt Col Fred S. Hodges

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War I
Theater of Operations

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Central Pacific 1941-1943
Guadalcanal 1942-1943
New Guinea 1943-1944
Northern Solomons 1943-1944
Eastern Mandates 1943-1944
Bismarck Archipelago 1943-1944
Western Pacific 1944-1945
Leyte 1944-1945
Luzon 1944-1945
Southern Philippines 1945
China Offensive 1945
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater 1941-1945
Korea: UN Defensive 1950
UN Offensive 1950
CCF Intervention 1950-1951

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Woleai Island, 18 Apr-15 May 1944
Borneo, 30 Sep 1944

Presidential Unit Citation (Navy)
[1942]

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1985-30 Jun 1987

1 Jun 1988-30 Jun 1990

1 Jul 1990-29 May 1992

30 May 1992-29 May 1994

1 Jun 1994-31 May 1996

1 Jun 1998-31 May 2000

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation

7 Jul-[16 Nov 1950]

EMBLEM



31 Test and Evaluation Squadron

31 Test and Evaluation Squadron emblem: On a disc Azure, a triangle Sable fimbriated Argent point to chief charged with a skull and crossbones of the last, all within a narrow border Or. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "31 TES" in Yellow letters. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The skull and crossbones in the triangle represent a warning to the enemy to beware. (Approved, 10 Sep 1934 and revised, 9 Mar 1995)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

On 26 June 1917 the 31 Bomb Squadron came into being. It was organized as the 31 Aero Squadron at Kelly Field Texas, under the command of First Lieutenant John E. Rossel. The personnel strength was built around a nucleus from the First Company, "B" Provisional Battalion, of the Signal Corps; which had been activated the month before.

After a scant two months of training, a Captain Carl Spatz was placed in command of the squadron and sealed orders transferred the organization from Kelly Field to an unannounced destination. On 15 September 1917 the Squadron arrived in England and began intensive training in the intricate ways of war-making.

In England air and ground personnel of the 31 wound up three rigorous months of training and reassembled in Issodum, France, in December of 1917. And it was on this move that this Squadron began its long string of "Firsts", the 31 being one of the first aero squadrons to arrive in France in 1917.

The 31 spent over a year and a half in France. They were assigned 15 Meter French Nieuports to fly, one of the most difficult airplanes of the last war to maintain and fly. Under the most adverse conditions they kept these planes in the air just as their sons are doing now a quarter of a century and a half a world apart.

The 31 moved to Field 5 on January 18th, 1918. They were assigned the maintenance of aircraft. Here they built barracks and hangars and reached 100 percent efficiency, a record they would maintain throughout the entire war.

Although the 31, as a squadron, did not go into combat, its personnel had a glorious war record. Captain Spatz and a First Lieutenant Mumford received the Distinguished Service Cross for daring missions and exceptional bravery. Many other fliers destined to become the "Aces" of World War I received their final training as a member of the 31 before moving up to actively engaged air units.

The 31 Aero Squadron did not return from France until after the War; it arrived at Mitchell Field, Long Island, on 14 April 1919 and then was demobilized. Three years later it was placed on the inactive list of the regular army as the Thirty-First Bombardment Squadron.

In April 1931 the 31 was again called to active duty at March Field, California, under the command of

Captain Earle C. Harper. It was equipped with what was then the latest type bombers—the Martin B-10. An extensive training program was organized and in December, 1934, the Squadron moved to Hamilton Field, California.

On February 1st, 1938, the Squadron left the United States for Hickam Field, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. Under the command of Major James F. Taylor, the Squadron consisted of thirteen B-18s, 180 enlisted men, and thirty officers. The Squadron was transported by the ships *Meigs* and *Luddington*.

The 31 Squadron arrived at Hickam Field on February 8th, 1938. They were housed in tents on the hangar line. The 31 was the first bombardment unit based at Hickam.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and nearby Hickam Field on December 7, 1941, began at 7:55 AM. Many of the 31 Squadron members, whose December Roster listed 27 officers, 1 aviation cadet, and 197 enlisted men, were either in the mess hall or the Consolidated Barracks when the attack began. Some took cover within the barracks; others ran outside and hid in manholes, under vehicles and behind trees. Many 31ers grabbed their World War I gas masks and helmets and went to what they referred to as “the line” where the airplanes were kept. There were 8 hangers in that location. When they arrived at the line, they could see that many of the planes had been shot up or destroyed.

The first wave of the Japanese attack lasted until approximately 8:30 AM. Thirty-firsters were attempting to put machine guns and ammunition in the few planes that survived when the second raid began at 8:54 AM. The Japanese hit the air base and one of the bombs hit the barracks in which the 31 bunked. It was a 3-story reinforced concrete barracks with a flat roof. The bomb that hit one wing had a delayed action fuse. The bomb went through the roof of the 3rd floor and it went through the floor of the 3rd floor and exploded on the second floor. After the Japanese dropped the bombs, they strafed groups of personnel before ending the second raid.

An unsuccessful search for the Japanese fleet followed, led by 31 Commander Russell Waldron. As December 7 drew to a close, 31 Squadron members were listed among the dead and wounded. Squadron deaths included Jack Fox, William H. Northway, Frank J. Lango, and Felix S. Wegrzyn. Wounded in action were William C. Workman, Jack P. Hopkins, Evariste E. Charron, Ewald A. Koch, Ben O’Dette, Virgil A. Green, Gerald F. Kessler, Louis Penven, Malcolm D. Sackett, and George S. Snyder.

In February 1942, the 31 was assigned to the 7th Air Force and moved from Hickam Field May 23, 1942, relocating at Kipapa Gulch on Oahu’s central plateau. The move was in the interest of dispersion.

In June, 1942, American Intelligence deciphered the Japanese code, learning that the Japanese, under Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, wanted to take over Midway Island and from there, possibly launch another attack on the Hawaiian Islands. An American patrol spotted Japanese transports streaming toward Midway. American warships were dispatched to intercept the Japanese while

aircraft were sent to bomb the Japanese task force. Men and planes from the 5th Bomb Group, including the 31 Bomb Squadron (H), participated in this action. In a three-day battle, lasting from June 4-6, 1942, the Japanese were defeated.

After their loss at Midway, Japan's easternmost base was Wake Island: 1,300 miles southwest of Midway and west of the Hawaiian Islands. Wake was also the westernmost outpost that US forces could reach by air. In June 1942, General Clarence Tinker led a small group of planes on a strike mission against Wake. On June 7, General Tinker's plane was lost at sea. Flying on the General's crew for that mission were five members of the 31 Bomb Squadron.

As the summer of 1942 progressed, US Intelligence needed to know how extensive the Japanese base on Wake Island was. Two airplanes had been dispatched from Hawaii for photographic reconnaissance, but neither returned. Volunteers were needed for a third attempt. Major George Glober and crew, of the 31 Bomb Squadron, volunteered and were selected. The mission, staging through Midway, would be over 16 hours in duration. It would be the longest reconnaissance mission on record. In the early morning hours of July 31, 1942, Major Glober and his crew departed for Wake. They broke out of the cloud cover and turbulence just 15 minutes from Wake. The crew made three runs on Wake, covering the island in 60-degree overlap. Crewman Ed Caton photographed the gun positions, revetments, anti-aircraft positions, and the personnel locations. Japanese fighters rose to meet the lone bomber.

The Glober crew shot down six Japanese fighters but received bullet holes in their B-17. Major Glober, trying to escape the enemy, rose to 23,000 feet. He was indicating 350 knots on the indicator – an unheard of feat for a B-17 at that time. During the long flight back to Midway, the crew found a bullet lodged in the plane's compass, making navigation by instruments impossible. Hours later, with darkness upon them, the crew broke radio silence and called Midway, asking for lights – actions that were against wartime regulations. Midway responded and as the crew landed, completely out of fuel, they lost power in all four engines. The Glober crew included C. B. Walker, H. W. Smith, Robert A. Fries, Ed H. Caton, James T. [Sandy] Sanford, Robert L. Holliday, H. R. [Shorty] Inman, Claude B. Phillips, and Joe D. Lillis.

On August 7, 1942, American forces landed in Tulagi Harbor and on Florida and Guadalcanal Islands in the Solomon Islands. The 31 Squadron and her sister squadrons of the 5th Bomb Group were readied to move into the South Pacific to help stop the forward advance of the Japanese in the Solomons. Their 5th Bomb Group commander was Col. Brooke Allen.

The 31 Squadron moved to Kualoa Point on the northeast shore of Oahu on September 9, 1942. The stay at Kualoa was brief, for on November 9, 1942, personnel of the 31 Bomb Squadron boarded the *Peter H. Burnett* and sailed toward Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands, with a short stop being made at Fiji en route.

The 31 arrived at Peicoa Air Strip on Espiritu Santo November 30, 1942. For a short time, the 31 was a service squadron for the maintenance of aircraft. Guadalcanal was the base from which strikes against the Japanese were to be conducted, so advance units of the 31 landed on

Guadalcanal December 3, arriving in the midst of a Japanese air raid. When they hit the beach, the 31ers ran for the tree line. After the attack, it was noticed that they had run through a live mine field.

The 31 flew search missions upon arrival in the South Pacific. On one mission, two Squadron members were listed as "Missing in Action" over the South Pacific December 1st, 1942. They were Clair W. Glover and Ray Lindamood. On December 10th, the 31 lost its first man in combat. Carlyle (Moose) Coleman was a pilot, but was nervous about flying that day. He asked Squadron commander George Globber to fly in the pilot's seat while Coleman took the co-pilot's seat. The crew battled Japanese Zeroes. On the last pass by the last Zero, Carlyle took a bullet in the eye. He died instantly. He was buried on Guadalcanal. The men of the Squadron placed a propeller blade for his headstone and strung bandoleers of 50 caliber machine gun bullets around his grave.

From Guadalcanal, US bombers struck the Japanese bases further up the Solomon chain. The remainder of the 31 Squadron members arrived January 17, 1943, and established the first ongoing support base for the 31 Squadron as well as those who were reflexing in and out. Guadalcanal's code name was Cactus; Espiritu Santo was Buttons. The Japanese still controlled the northern part of Guadalcanal.

The 31 camped near Henderson Field. The men dug foxholes and sat on coconut logs to watch movies at their outdoor theater. Air raids were frequent. During one raid, Japanese bombs dropped into the 31 bivouac area. One man was killed, while three mess halls, the Dispensary, Orderly Room and Operations Tent were destroyed and the Intelligence Tent was damaged.

The 31 took care of both the aircraft and personnel of three bombardment groups on the Canal: their own 5th Group, as well as the 11th, and 307th Bomb Groups. The 31 was the only heavy bombardment squadron with ground personnel on the island in the first months of 1943.

In early 1943, their 5th Bomb Group was assigned to the newly formed 13th Army Air Force. Because they never camped near civilization, they were named *The Jungle Air Force*, and were under joint Army-Navy control. The 5th Bomb Group Commander was Col. Brooke Allen and his Executive Officer was Lt. Col. Marion Unruh.

New B-24s were arriving from the States in 1943. In March, with both the air and ground echelons now at Guadalcanal, the 31 entered into air operations. Their 5th Bomb Group's mission was to neutralize Kahili and Buka Airfields on Bougainville in the Solomons. If successful, the Japanese strongholds at Rabaul and Truk would be rendered ineffective. The 31 Bomb Squadron led the air strikes.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1943, the 31 flew missions. The Squadron suffered casualties along the way. On June 10, 1st Lt. Richard Snoddy and crew were listed as "Missing in Action" while on a mission to Kahili. First Lt. Gordon Hall and crew died July 20, and the same fate befell 1st Lt. John Epple and crew on July 25. Both crews perished in plane crashes in the New

Hebrides. First Lt. A. B. Elkins and crew were listed as "Missing in Action" July 28 after a water landing at Funa Futi. In August, while flying with Capt. William McKinley's crew, Stanley [Smitty] Zyskiewicz was killed on a mission to Kahili. August 26 saw another strike against Kahili. McKinley's plane was hit again, resulting in the wounding of Owen C. Carr and the death of Harold Nerstad.

Life on Guadalcanal was primitive. The men lived in tents, walked in mud, and had their energy drained by daily rains, insects, and disease. Fuse containers and gas drums were used for showers. Khakis were often wet, caked with mud and covered with mold. Washing Machine Charlie visited often. Charlie was a lone Japanese bomber whose misfiring engine and occasional bombs kept the Americans awake night after night.

In the summer of 1943, the 31 participated in missions against Japanese-held Munda Point on New Georgia Island. The Navy shelled the area south of the airstrip while 31 planes joined others to carpet bomb. The infantry followed, taking the airfield. The United States' capture of Munda denied its airfield to the Japanese and allowed the United States to use it as a base of operations. The 31 Squadron moved to Carney Field on Guadalcanal in late 1943. Again, the Squadron suffered casualties. Capt. Andrew Hughes and crew were listed as "Missing in Action" December 4, after their plane crashed in the Chabai area of Bougainville.

By early 1944, the 31 Squadron was continuing to strike Rabaul, the heart of the Japanese defensive efforts in the Solomons and the Bismarck Archipelago. From Rabaul, Japanese planes could bomb Allied airfields and troops. Rabaul received planes and supplies through Truk from Japan.

From Carney Field, the 31 Squadron moved to Munda on New Georgia Island for a short stay. While flying out of Munda, the 31 suffered casualties on March 5 when a B-24 piloted by Capt. Lewis Haire was hit by ack-ack over New Britain Island. The plane burst into flames and disintegrated in mid-air. Three crewmen parachuted to safety and were picked up by a Navy PBY after hours in the water. A fourth crewmember parachuted onto New Britain and was captured by the Japanese eight days later. The remaining seven crewmen were thought to have perished in the explosion.

On April 20, 1944, the 31 moved to Momote Airdrome on Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands, the Bismarck Archipelago. This base brought the entire Caroline Island chain within the Americans' bombing range and enabled the US to aid General Douglas MacArthur's advance in New Guinea and Saipan. Tragedy struck the 31 when 1st Lt. Leon Martin piloted the *Cisco Kid II* as it attempted a takeoff from Momote Airdrome. The plane, carrying a full bomb load, crashed into a Seabee camp. The entire crew perished, as did many Seabees. Members of the Martin crew were Henry A. Schrobe, Thomas C. Pappas, Arthur C. Wolf, Jr., Neil M. Mauderer, Walter R. Rawleigh, John W. Gilb, Robert O. Russell, Willis L. Butler, Alden M. Campbell, and George W. Johnson.

At Los Negros, the 31 camped on the edge of a coconut plantation. They lived in tents. The latrine was a pit with a tarp over it and the shower was a 55-gallon steel drum, cut in half with holes

bored in the bottom. Again, there was an outdoor theater and also a PX, another tent where the men could buy such items as toothpaste and chewing gum. Tokyo Rose played American music and urged the US troops to surrender.

The 31 flew numerous missions out of Los Negros. Some of the most important were to Woleai in the Caroline Islands. Woleai was an important Japanese search plane and naval base, and a stepping-stone for aircraft and supplies headed for the Japanese-held islands. In a series of 13 strikes, 5th Bomb Group B-24s dropped 140 tons of bombs on Woleai, destroying all facilities. For these efforts, the 5th Bomb Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

During May the 31 Squadron concentrated on bombing Biak off the northern coast of New Guinea. These were pre-invasion air strikes to soften up Japanese defenses for the May 28 invasion by Allied Forces. It was 800 miles to the target from Momote: 10 hours, 10 minutes flight time.

Thirty-first crews were bombing Truk in June 1944. The Americans were planning an invasion of Saipan in the Mariannas, and aircrews were to neutralize Truk. Truk Atoll had four main centers of naval and army air might, and was called the largest and most formidable barrier facing the Allied advance.

The 31 Bomb Squadron suffered numerous casualties during the raids on Truk. Lt. Ed L. Lynch was killed in action June 7, 1944, when hit in the chest and head by a 20mm shell on a strike over Eten Island, Truk Atoll. Three 31ers were listed as "Missing in Action" June 17 after they bailed out near the Hermit Islands while on a strike to Eten Island.

Also in June the 31 bombed Yap Island, one of a string of Japanese defenses leading to the Philippines. It was a 2,046-mile round trip all over open water. Flight time was 12 hours and 20 minutes.

The 13th Army Air Force transferred from joint Army-Navy control under Admiral William (Bull) Halsey to the command of United States Army General George Kenney in June 1944. Meanwhile, the 31 struck Noemfoor, New Guinea. The bombing raids were preliminary to the July 2 invasion by General MacArthur's ground forces.

On August 21, 1944, the 31 moved to Wakde, New Guinea Islands, Bismarck Archipelago. Wakde was 1 ½ miles long and ¾ of a mile wide. Camp was made in a compressed area between the runway and the ocean. Tent pegs overlapped and the ground was littered with rotten coconuts and tree stumps. From this base, missions would be flown to neutralize the Japanese storehouses, arsenal and administrative departments in the Palau Islands, the last eastern barrier separating the US from the Philippines. The missions to Palau were successful.

Next, the 31 Squadron took part in attacks on the Halmahera Islands from which the Japanese were protecting their oil and gasoline industries in Borneo. General MacArthur was planning an

invasion after the missions were completed. His landing would put American forces within striking distance of the Philippines.

Thirty-first air crews and ground maintenance personnel moved to Noemfoor Island, off the northern coast of New Guinea September 26, 1944. The remainder of the 31 stayed at Wakde. From Noemfoor bombers were ordered to attack Balikpapan, Borneo, which was the most important source of aviation fuel and oil the Japanese had. General MacArthur said it was "the most strategically important Jap target in the Pacific."

The 31 Squadron and 5th Bomb Group (H) Commander Thomas Musgrave led the first mission to Balikpapan on September 30, 1944. The mission took some crews 15 ½ to 17 hours. The Pandansari Oil Refinery was the primary target. Alternate targets included processing buildings and tank storage facilities. The oil refinery was supplying over 35% of the fuel being used by the Japanese Air Forces in total. It was supplying 50% of the fuel being used in the Southwest Pacific by the Japanese forces and 65% of the aviation gases being used by the Japanese air forces in the Philippines. The flight was 2600 miles round trip. No formation of B-24 bombers had ever flown such a distance, and it exceeded the manufacturer's recommendations. The Balikpapan mission was successful but the cost in men and planes was high. For this mission, the 5th Bomb Group received its second Presidential Unit Citation, the only one it ever received for a single mission. Other attacks on the same targets followed, and by the end of October 1944, 433 tons of bombs had been dropped on Balikpapan.

The 31 Squadron also participated in strikes against Japanese oil tank farms on Tarakan Island off the northeast coast of Borneo. The 31 bombed the main pumping stations. The success of the Tarakan missions was important because it stopped the supply of oil products the Japanese needed to defend the Philippines.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf was fought in the Philippines October 24-26, 1944. The 31 Squadron flew in support of General MacArthur's invasion of Leyte and assisted in the naval battle of Leyte Gulf. When American ground forces landed in the Philippines, the 31's new missions were to knock out enemy airfields on the Negros Islands and keep them neutralized so the Japanese could launch no air attacks on advancing United States ground forces, and to keep a constant watch over shipping lanes in the Sulu Sea to prevent Japanese supplies and reinforcements from reaching the Philippines.

Intelligence reported that the Japanese were constructing a "defensive triangle" from the Halmahera Islands to the Palau Islands to Mindanao in the Philippines. Three Japanese armies and 80,000 troops were said to be holding the triangle. On September 15, 1944, United States forces invaded Morotai, the northern most Halmahera Island, and within days, an airfield was being constructed.

On November 4, 1944, the 31 Squadron moved to Pito Field, Morotai. Between September 14, 1944, and February 1, 1945, the Japanese carried out 172 sorties and 82 air raids against Morotai. From Morotai the 31 bombed assorted targets in Borneo, the Celebes Islands and the Philippines.

The Squadron took particular pleasure in knocking out gun emplacements on Corregidor, PI in advance of an American landing.

On November 15, 1944, remnants of the Japanese Leyte Gulf battle force were spotted in Brunei Bay on the northwest coast of Borneo. Thirty-firsters participated in the air strike against the fleet on November 16. The ack-ack was intense and nearly every 5th Group plane was hit. However, the Group succeeded in scattering the Japanese fleet.

Still based on Morotai, the 31 suffered another loss January 10, 1945, when 2nd Lt. Gerald Long and crew were listed as "Missing in Action" after their plane went down en route to Morotai from a mission to Luzon, the Philippines. Eight Squadron members were killed when the C-47 in which they were passengers crashed on take-off March 7, 1945. The C-47 had been carrying a jeep that had burst into flames when the plane crashed. Schultz, S/Sgt. Swain, S/Sgt. Emptage, and Cpl. Chaffee. Funeral services for Squadron members were held at the cemetery on Morotai.

The 31 air echelon moved to Aba Field, Samar, the Philippines, March 13, 1945. The rear echelon, which had been at Wakde since September, 1944, joined them, bringing the entire 31 Squadron together. Instead of the usual C-Rations and Spam, 31ers now received fresh meat, eggs, Coca-Cola and ice cream.

On March 14, 1945, a C-47 had been sent to pick up personnel on rest leave in Sydney, Australia. On the return to base, the crew was forced to ditch the aircraft off the coast of Australia. Thirty-firster T/Sgt. Williams died as a result.

Second Lt. Cyril Reinstatler, a 31 radar operator and bombardier, was listed as "Missing in Action" April 9, 1945. Squadron reports stated, "On 9 April 'Triple-threat' flew with the 23rd Squadron on a 2-aircraft photographic reconnaissance of the Saigon, French Indo-China, area. Eight to ten fighters jumped the aircraft over Saigon and the crew with whom Lt. Reinstatler was flying was forced to bail out. All but Lt. Reinstatler were recovered by a rescue Catalina and submarine. According to survivors, the parachute of [Reinstatler] did not fully open."

During the summer of 1945, the 31 continued bombing Japanese airfields in Borneo and the Celebes. Beginning August 1, 1945, strikes were flown against Formosa. On August 6 and 9, atom bombs were dropped on Japan. While Japanese assessed the devastation, the 31 continued to fly missions.

On September 2, 1945, the Japanese formally surrendered. With the signing of the peace treaty, the wartime activities of the 31 Bomb Squadron (H) ended. The Squadron departed Samar, the Philippines, for the United States in December, 1945.

Under the direct operational control of FEAF and with electronic countermeasures as the primary mission, the 31 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (SRS) on June 29, 1950, began flying combat missions to provide FEAF Bomber Command with target and bomb-damage assessment photography. By July 12, it had moved to Japan in order to provide developed pictures as quickly

as possible. On October 18, foreshadowing the Chinese intervention, a 31 SRS RB-29 crew observed more than 75 enemy fighters parked at Antung Airfield, across the Yalu River. Effective November 15, the 31 SRS moved on paper to join the 5th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Beale AFB, California, to be replaced by the 91st SRS. Stations. Kadena AB, Okinawa, to July 11, 1950; Yokota AB, Japan, c. July 12, 1950;

As part of its war contingency plan the 31 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron immediately prepared to redeploy its RB-29s from Kadena AFB, Okinawa to Yokota AFB near Tokyo. First to take off for Japan, late on the afternoon of 25 June and within hours of the start of the invasion, were Captain Joe Davis and his crew in one of the RB-29 Ferret planes. As dusk fell the plane was heading almost due north up the Yellow Sea, flying parallel with the west coast of Korea at 25,000 feet. Just short of Lueshun (Port Arthur) it turned east and, cloaked in darkness, flew across the width of North Korea. The RB-29 emerged over the Sea of Japan to the east of Korea, swung on to a more southerly heading and made for Yokota. Almost certainly it was the first operational mission by a US plane during the Korean conflict. Yet although it is of historical interest, the flight secured no positive intelligence. Lieutenant Jim Gahagan, one of the electronic warfare officers on the plane, told the author: "As I remember, we didn't pick up any signals from radars in North Korea during that mission."

At regular intervals the 31 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron Ferrets went out alone over enemy territory at night, or in company with bomber formations by day, searching for the radar signals which might presage some stiffening of the enemy air defenses. Such signals were not to be found, however, and the unit did not need to confine its activities to the war zone. As part of its strategic reconnaissance role it flew regular missions along the Chinese coast, looking for the redeployment of radars that might precede any attempt by the Chinese to invade Formosa. Occasionally it also sent aircraft north, along the coast of Siberia and into the Sea of Kohotsk, to check that there were no important new deployments in those areas.

A planned F-35 upgrade should be considered a separate acquisition program to improve oversight, the Government Accountability Office said in a report released Thursday. The GAO recommended Congress direct the Pentagon to breakout the follow-on modernization, or Block 4, because it is expected to need nearly \$3 billion in funding over the next six years, an amount that would qualify it as a major acquisition program, according to the report. If DOD continues to handle the configuration as part of the existing baseline, the report notes, the block will not be subject to certain statutory and regulatory oversight requirements, and transparency will be limited. However, the F-35 joint program office said in statement that separating Block 4 "would generate an unnecessary administrative burden and create challenges in maintaining a partnered environment outside of the existing program charter." The office will work with Congress to establish reporting requirements on the upgraded configuration's cost, schedule, and performance as necessary, according to the statement.2016

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