

# **40<sup>th</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (VERY HEAVY)**

## **LINEAGE**

40<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Medium) constituted, 22 Nov 1940  
Activated in Puerto Rico, 1 Apr 1941  
Redesignated 40<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Heavy), May 1942  
Redesignated 40<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Very Heavy), Nov 1943  
Inactivated, 1 Oct 1946

## **STATIONS**

Borinquen Field, PR, 1 Apr 1941  
Howard Field, CZ, 16 Jun 1942  
Albrook Field, CZ, 16 Sep 1942  
Howard Field, CZ, 3-15 Jun 1943  
Pratt AAFld, Kan, 1 Jul 1943-12 Mar 1944  
Chakulia, India, 2 Apr 1944-25 Feb 1945  
West Field, Tinian, 4 Apr-7 Nov 1945  
March Field, CA, 27 Nov 1945  
Davis-Monthan Field, AZ, 8 May-1 Oct 1946

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Twentieth Jun 1944  
Strategic Air Command, 21 Mar 1946

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

## **COMMANDERS**

LTC William B. Sousa, 1 Apr 1941  
Maj George W. McGregor, 29 Apr 1941  
Col Ivan M. Palmer, 26 Nov 1941  
Col Vernon C. Smith, 19 Jan 1943  
Col Henry K. Mooney, 16 May 1943  
Col Lewis R. Parker, 1 Jul 1943  
LTC Louis E. Coira, 24 Feb 1944  
Col Leonard F. Harman, 10 Apr 1944  
Col William H. Blanchard, 4 Aug 1944

Col Henry R. Sullivan, 16 Feb 1945  
Col William K. Skaer, 27 Feb 194  
LTC Oscar R. Schaaf, 21 Mar 1946  
Col Alva L. Harvey, 4 May 1946  
LTC Oscar R. Schaaf, 21 Aug 1946  
1LT William F. Seith, 21 Sep-1 Oct 1946

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

Antisubmarine, American Theater  
India-Burma  
Air Offensive, Japan  
China Defensive  
Western Pacific  
Central Burma

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations  
Yawata, Japan, 20 Aug 1944  
Japan, 5-14 May 1945  
Japan, 24 Jul 1945

#### **EMBLEM**

Azure, on a bomb burst proper fimbriated argent four drop bombs in cross or. (Approved, 28 Mar 1942. This insignie was replaced, 6 Jan 1954)

#### **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **MOTTO**

#### **NICKNAME**

#### **OPERATIONS**

Assigned to Transported supplies over the Hump to staging bases in China before entering combat with a strike on railroad shops at Bangkok, Thailand, on 5 Jun 1944. On 15 Jun participated in the first AAF attack on Japan since the Doolittle raid in 1942. Operating from bases in India, and at times staging through fields in China, the group struck such targets as transportation centers, naval installations, iron works, and aircraft plants in Burma, Thailand, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Formosa, receiving a DUG for bombing iron and steel works at Yawata, Japan, on 20 Aug 1944. From a staging field in Ceylon, it mined waters near the port of Palembang, Sumatra, in Aug 1944. Moved to Tinian, Feb-Apr 1945, for further operations against Japan. Made daylight attacks from high altitude on strategic targets, participated in incendiary raids on urban areas, and dropped mines

in Japanese shipping lanes. Received a DUG for attacking naval aircraft factories at Kure, oil storage facilities at Oshima, and the industrial area of Nagoya, in May 1945. Raided light metal industries in Osaka in Jul 1945, being awarded another DUG for this mission. After V-J Day, dropped food and supplies to Allied prisoners in Japan, Korea, and Formosa, and took part in show of-force missions.

#### 40th Bombardment Group

Laid down officially as the 40th Bombardment Group (Medium) on 22 November 1940, this unit was formed from the cadre of the 25<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, and was activated in Puerto Rico as an element of the 13th Composite Wing on 12 March 1941 (although some official USAF sources cite activation date as 1 April; the reasons for this discrepancy are not clear). Commissioned personnel were drawn from the 25th Bomb Group, while virtually all of the enlisted force were drafted from (amongst others) the 24th Air Base Group, 25th Bomb Group, and 27th Reconnaissance Squadron (LR). This is the same organization, from a lineage standpoint, that went to India with Boeing B-29's in March 1944.

Initially stationed at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, the 40th BG's subordinate units consisted of its own Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron (HHS), the 29th Bombardment Squadron, the 44th Bombardment Squadron, and the 45th Bombardment Squadron (as well as the 5th Reconnaissance Squadron, which was attached from 1 April 1941, for administrative purposes only), all equipped, throughout their stay in the Antilles, on the Douglas B-18.

As early as October 1941, it had been proposed that the new Group be moved to either Losey Field or Benedict Field (St. Lucia), allowing the 36th Pursuit Group room to move to Borinquen. The Group staff was quick to point out that there was a complete lack of maintenance facilities for a bomber unit at Losey and Benedict, and that even as things stood, most maintenance at Borinquen was being carried out in the open, and was described as "highly unsatisfactory." Additionally, it was pointed out that supply and re-supplying a bomb group at St. Lucia "would require everything to be lightered ashore." As normal operations (or an average of 20 missions per month at the time) for the Group and its attached recon squadron required 684,000 gallons of fuel, this would mean manhandling not fewer than 13,000 barrels of fuel ashore to St. Lucia!

With the coming of war, the Group and all subordinate units was still at Borinquen Field, but was very under strength, with the HHS with seven B-18's, two B-18's, four Curtiss P-36A's and a Northrop A-17 as of January 1942. There were a total of 15 crews to man these and 10 of these had more than 12 months experience.

In February 1942, the Group was assigned to the newly created Antilles Air Task Force, and, on 3 March 1942, the 5th Reconnaissance Squadron (M), which had previously been attached, was actually assigned to the Group. The Group remained under strength and, like its sister outfit, the 25th BG, was also short six navigators.

On 22 April 1942, with the same constitution, and carrying out as best it could anti-submarine sweeps of the central Caribbean, the 5th Reconnaissance Squadron was redesignated as the 395th Bombardment Squadron (M) in recognition of its actual function within the Group (although another order gives this redesignation as occurring on 11 May!). This was shortly before the Group moved,

starting 7 June 1942, enmasse to Panama (although the actual assignment orders were dated 16 June 1942), where Group Headquarters was established at Howard Field. The subordinate squadrons were dispersed to take up local patrol responsibilities with the 395th Bomb Squadron (now with an (H) designator) going to Rio Hato by 17 June, the 44th Bomb Squadron (H) at Guatemala City, the 29th Bomb Squadron at Aguadulce, Panama and the 45th Bomb Squadron at France Field (although it, too, moved to David, Panama on 27 June)! The 74th Bomb Squadron was also assigned to the Group until 12 May 1943.

The 74th Bombardment Squadron (H) was attached to the Group on 5 July 1942 (formerly of the 6th Bomb Group (H)), while the 395th BS (H) was detached from the 40th BG and attached to the 6th BG! These attachments and detachments were made permanent on 9 August 1942 (although other documents say 21 August).

By 16 September 1942, the Group Headquarters had been moved from Howard to Albrook Field. Earlier, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron had been disbanded and its personnel and equipment disbursed to the several squadrons (c. 8 August 1942). The skeleton Group Head-quarters moved back to Howard Field on 2 June 1943.

On 12 May 1943, in a move that has confounded some historians, the 395th Bomb Squadron (H) was again assigned to the 40th Bomb Group - but only until June/July 1943, when the Squadron was withdrawn from Sixth Air Force and, at least on paper, returned to CONUS, its last Panama duty station having been Rio Hato.

As the war in the Caribbean lost emphasis, the need for the Group and some of its squadrons was clearly past. The 40th Bomb Group (H) was formally reassigned to Pratt Army Air Field in Kansas effective 1 July 1943, although it had started to disintegrate at Howard Field, CZ, between 3 and 15 June. The subordinate 29th and 74th Bomb Squadron remained in the Sixth Air Force and were reassigned, at least nominally at the time, to the 6th Bomb Group (H).

It should also be noted that the 1st Platoon (Howard Field), 2nd Platoon (Aguadulce) and 3rd Platoon (France Field) of the 485th Ordnance Company, Aviation (Bomb) was also assigned to the 40th Bomb Group and rendered outstanding support.

There are no known photos of 40th Bomb Group aircraft, nor do any details survive as to any markings schemes utilized within the Group during its Caribbean sojourn, although a Group insignia was approved 28 March 1942.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

