

Organizational History, Hq. 318th Fighter Group, VII Fighter Command, Seventh Air Force, Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, A.P.O. #244.

OPERATIONS:

Aerial combat was the high-point of air operations, during November. (Incl.1) Arrival of 36 P-38s from Oahu, 11 and 12 November, has transformed the duties and responsibilities of the Group to that of a strategical air unit. There are now two distinct significant phases of operation: (a) long-range escort and fighter interception, and (b) Combat Air Patrol of Saipan and Tinian, and continued neutralization of the airstrip at Pagan.

A daylight attack on 27 November was by far the most hectic day for all personnel of the Group, since arriving on Saipan. Two Zekes were shot down over and near Saipan, and two more were caught at Pagan by two flights that went up there during the raid. The interception was made while the Jap planes were circling the island. Six of the thirteen planes shot down during the month were bagged on long-range missions with B-24s to Truk and Iwo Jima. Approximately eight Zekes intercepted over Truk. Four were destroyed. (Incl.2) The first escort mission, all the way to Iwo, took place 18 November. The P-38s escorted two F-5s that photographed the island. Acting as navigational escorts were three B-24s. However, no interception was encountered on this mission. It was on the second trip to Iwo Jima, 27 November, that 3 to 5 Zekes intercepted, and two were destroyed. (Incl.3)

The first bombing of Saipan, since 6 July, took place the night of 2-3 November. One Betty was shot down by a P-61 of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron. There were six bombing and strafing raids during the month. Major Roeser, Group Operations Officers, took off at dawn after the 3 November raid, accompanying three flights of the 333rd Squadron, and shot down a Betty, as it was preparing to land at Pagan. (Incl.4) Lt. McCaul, of the 73rd Squadron, is credited with destroying an Irving over Tinian, while on regular C.A.P. Three days later, he was shot down by friendly AA on Saipan,



Organizational History, Hq. 318th Fighter Group, cont'd.

during the daylight attack. A total of twenty-four missions were flown to Pagan. These consisted of rocket and strafing attacks, and also armed reconnaissance, strafing targets of opportunity. Particular attention was given the North taxi-strip, as it was felt that emergency landings could be made. No attempt has been made to repair the runway itself, since last summer. Only meagre and inaccurate machine-gun fire, and possible 40mm, was received. P-38s as well as the P-47s were used on combat patrol. The 6th squadron maintained a P-61 on night CAP constantly. One P-47 was lost during the month as a result of combat. None were lost operationally. The work of the Squadron Engineering and Maintenance sections continues to be of the highest efficiency. Typical of the initiative exercised was the replacement of the B-10 bomb shackle for wing installation on the P-47s, instead of the former, the B-7 is now used. A marked decrease in "hung bombs" was the result. (Incl.5)

PERSONNEL:

Colonel Sanders, Commanding Officer of the 318th Fighter Group, was named Base Commander of East Field, 20 November. (Incl.6) 1st Lt. Graber was assigned to Group Headquarters from VII Fighter Command, and detailed Personal Equipment and Oxygen Officer. (Incl.7) Six Enlisted Men were also assigned from Fighter Command during the month. One Enlisted Man returned to the States on reassignment, and one returned on furlough. There were no Officer or Enlisted Men's promotions, during November.

HEALTH AND MORALE:

All-around health status of Group personnel continued to improve, with the increase in fresh meat, vegetables, and fruit. The monthly physical check-up showed a noticeable gain in weight of almost every person. The number of cases of skin diseases has decreased sharply. Vitamin pills are provided, and if calcium-phosphate tablets were available, it would do a great deal to round out the diet. After mail, good meals are next, in maintaining morale. The lack of promotions, after six months in the forward area, continues to be a weak link in the morale chain.



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OPERATIONS:

The P-38s that arrived in November were formed into the Provisional P-38 Squadron. With Colonel Sanders as commander, the 318th Fighter Group was designated as CTU 93.1.1 in the Strategic Air Force setup. (Incl.1)

The added responsibilities as a strategic unit went hand in hand with the tactical duties of defense of Saipan and Tinian, and daily reconnaissance of Pagan to assure its neutralization. Pilots who flew a strafing mission to Iwo Jima one day were apt to be flying a reconnaissance mission to Pagan three or four days thence.

After the daylight attack on the B-29s at Isley Field, 27 November, the number of planes on Combat Air Patrol was increased to provide greater security to the Superfortresses. This cut the number of available planes for the Pagan missions, and the 28th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron took over the duties, in addition to their other assignments, for two weeks. At the end of this period, the total number of planes on patrol guarding the approaches to Isley was decreased, and the P-47s once more made the trek to Pagan for the daily checkup. No repair work was attempted by the Japs to put the runway and taxiways in operational order.

P-61 night fighters of the 6th Squadron accounted for five of the nine enemy planes destroyed by the Group during December. (Incl.2) Major Roeser, Group Operations Officer, bagged two, raising his total to three. The other two were knocked down at Iwo Jima, during strikes by the P-38s. In addition to the planes destroyed, a Jap Naval Transport (APD) was set afire by sustained strafing attacks, during the 27 December strike on Iwo Jima. As a result of this action, the ship was beached, and Bomber Command photos and reports show it being stripped.

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Organizational History, Hq. 318th Fighter Group, cont'd.

In all, there were four fighter sweeps and one escort mission of photo planes flown to Iwo Jima by the P-38 Provisional Squadron during the month. (Incls. 3-7)

See Hist of Sq  
1944  
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The six-months mark on Saipan was passed by the Group, 22 December. A recapitulation of operational activities during this period is set out in Incl. 8. Aircraft losses, through combat and operational circumstances, had to be reckoned with in the light of carrying out the Group's primary function of air defense. Lack of replacements for men returned on rotation increased the responsibilities of the maintenance sections with the advent of the twin-engine fighters. (Incl. 9)

The importance and effectiveness of night fighter protection is borne out by the total number of enemy planes destroyed by the Group-33, of which 13 were accounted for by the P-61s. Five were shot down by day fighters in the Saipan-Tinian vicinity. The remaining kills occurred on sweeps to Iwo Jima, Truk, and Pagan. (Incl. 10)

Four night bombing attacks were made by the Japs during the month. The longest was three hours, Christmas night. No casualties or serious damage resulted from them.

PERSONNEL:

Pilots and crewmen of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron, who had been credited with shooting down Jap planes, were awarded the Air Medal, in a ceremony held at East Field, 3 January. Lt. Haberman, pilot, and Lt. Mooney, radar operator, were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for two kills in one night. Presentation was made by Lt. Gen. Richardson, Commanding General Army Forces P.O.A. Also on the presentation staff were Major Gen. Douglass, Commanding General Seventh Air Force, and Major Gen. Jarman, Island Commander, Saipan.

Major Deamant was assigned to Group Headquarters as S-2, from VII Fighter Command. Capt. Hoover, Group S-2, was assigned to Hq. and Hq. Squadron, VII Fighter Command. (Incl. 11)

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY, HQ. 318TH FIGHTER GROUP, SEVENTH AIR FORCE  
ARMY AIR FORCES, PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS, A.P.O. # 244.

JANUARY INSTALLMENT OF HQ. 318TH FIGHTER GROUP HISTORY

NARRATIVE:

The 318th Fighter Group carried out its primary responsibility in defense of Saipan and Tinian by maintaining constant Combat Air Patrol during daylight hours by P-47s, and night C.A.P. by P-61s. Daily armed reconnaissance missions were flown to Pagan, to determine whether any repair work was being done on the runway or taxiways.

Seven long-range strikes were made by the P-38 Provisional Squadron during January. Three of these missions were escort of B-29s, B-24s, and Navy Photo planes to Truk; four were directed against Iwo Jima which consisted of escort for a combined B-29 & B-24 strike, high cover escort for B-24s, a low-level strafing attack, and escort for 2 F-5s. (For complete details of these missions, see Mission Reports Appendix for January.). A recapitulation of air operations for the month is given in the monthly Intelligence Report. (Incl. 1).

Although Operations Memorandum #6-45, this headquarters (Incl. 2) sets up the Standard Operating Procedure for Emergency Long-Range Fighter Strike on Iwo Jima, all Truk and Iwo Jima missions have followed this outline for the preparation and execution of these strikes. (Operations Orders covering these special strikes are appended as Incl. 3).

The most tragic incident since the Group's arrival on Saipan occurred 19 January. The left engine of a P-38 burst into flames on takeoff. The plane crashed and burned, starting a fire that set off a bomb dump in which the plane had crashed. Casualties resulting from this accident and the explosions



ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY, HQ. 318TH FIGHTER GROUP -- CONTINUED

that followed numbered sixteen dead and twenty-four hospitalized. (For a detailed account of this accident, see Incl. 4, "Bomb Explosion, 19 January 1945". Casualties as pertained to the 318th Fighter Group are listed in Incl. 1).

During enemy bombing raids on the nights of 1 January and 2 January, Night Fighters of the 6th Squadron were credited with two Jap planes destroyed and one probably destroyed. Two Jap planes on reconnaissance were shot down by daylight C.A.F. planes. ✓

During the "moon period" (the last week in one month and the first week in the next) a special flight of 6 P-38s is set up. In the event of an air raid, they take off immediately after "Flash White" is sounded to strike Iwo Jima, and destroy any planes in the air or on the ground. SOP is also set up for 6 P-47s to strike Pagan to become effective after an air raid, in an effort to destroy any planes attempting to make an emergency landing. Summaries of each week's air and ground activity on Saipan for January are appended as Incl. 5.

Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson, Commanding General, Army Forces Pacific Ocean Areas, awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, and Oak Leaf Cluster to pilots and Radar Operators of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron 3 January 1945. (Incl. 6). Also on the presentation staff were Major Gen. Robert W. Douglass Jr., Commanding General, Seventh Air Force, and Major Gen. Sanderford R. Jarmon, Island Commander, Saipan.

On 27 January, pilots of the 333rd Squadron were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, and Oak Leaf Cluster by Major Gen. Douglass, Commanding General, Seventh Air Force. (Incl. 7). Also on the presentation

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY, HQ. 318TH FIGHTER GROUP -- CONTINUED

staff were Col. R. J. Erickson, Adjutant General, Seventh Air Force, and Col. L. M. Sanders, Commanding Officer, 318th Fighter Group.

Col. H. M. Cox was assigned to the Group as Deputy Commander, 12 January 1945. Capt. Berry, Group Ordnance Officer, returned to the mainland on leave, and Lt. Wyatt was placed on DS from Hq. Seventh Air Force to act in this capacity. Capt. John H. Talbot was detailed as Ass't. Group Adjutant, and WOJG Carl F. Robey was detailed as Ass't Group Communications Officer. (The above duty assignments are included in Special Orders #1-8, this headquarters, for the month of January. Incl. 8). Capt. Mount, Group Communications Officer, returned to the mainland to attend school at Orlando, Florida. 1st Lt. W. P. Freligh, Ass't. Group S-2 Officer, was promoted to Captain. Lt. P.C.V. Edwins, Group Weather Officer, and Lt. A. A. Kampman, Group Photographic Interpreter, were promoted to 1st Lt. (S.O. 21, par. 1, Hq AAFPOA, 21 January 1945. Incl. 9). Two Enlisted Men returned to the mainland on furlough.

Isely Field #2, Saipan, was renamed Kobler Field, in memory of 1st Lt. Wayne F. Kobler of the 19th Squadron who was shot down during the first days on the Saipan campaign. East Field was changed to Kagman Point Field. (See letter, U. S. Pacific Fleet Forward Area, Central Pacific, 22 January 1945. Incl. 10). Officers of Group Headquarters held open house for their club, "The Ready Shack", 14 January.

STAFF SECTION NOTES: -

Prior to 21 January, there had been no definite procedure in securing material for the Group history from each separate section. On this date, Major Deamant, Group Historical Officer, called a meeting of all Group Officers for the purpose of discussing the Staff Section responsibilities in preparing the monthly group history. As a result, notes are now kept by each section

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HISTORY OF 318TH FIGHTER GROUP

FEBRUARY INSTALLMENT

NARRATIVE

Continuing its primary responsibility in defense of Saipan and Tinian the 318th Fighter Group maintained constant Combat Air Patrol by P-47s during the day and P-61s at night. To determine whether any repair work was being done on the runway or taxiways daily armed reconnaissance flights were flown to Pagan.

P-38s of the Provisional Squadron flew five long-range missions during the month. Four were in escort of B-24s and F-5s to Iwo Jima; One was a fighter sweep and escort of four PB4Y-1Ps on photo mission to Truk. The seven planes destroyed by squadrons of the Group were shot down over Iwo. However these missions were not without cost to the P-38s as two pilots and three planes were lost. (For complete details of these missions see Mission Reports Appendix for February.) A recapitulation of air operations for the month is given in the monthly Intelligence Report (Incl. 1).

The Operations Orders which set up the details for the preparation and execution of special missions are appended as Incl. 2.

Successful thwarting of a possible Jap air raid the night of 10 February (Japanese "Empire" Day) by destroying four Bettys and three Zekes during the daylight attack on Iwo was acknowledged by a congratulatory message received from CTF 93. (Incl. 3).

Claim for an enemy Naval Transport (APD) which had been beached as a result of strafing by P-38s at Iwo Jima, 27 December 1944, was approved by Hq, AAFPOA. Appropriate entries were made in the official record of the 318th Fighter Group (Incl. 4).

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HISTORY OF 318TH FIGHTER GROUP - FEBRUARY INSTALLMENT --- CONTINUED

A P-47 was completely destroyed by fire when the left tire blew out on takeoff causing the plane to veer sharply to the left, hitting the base of the control tower and a tent immediately adjacent which was used by the base MPs as a headquarters. The pilot was rescued from the plane. Four men of the 364th Service Group who were in the tent hit by the plane were either killed by the impact of the plane when it struck the tent or died as a result of burns from the fire that followed. (For a detailed account of this accident, see Incl. 5, "Plane Crash, 17 February 1945", and attached photographs taken by the 28th Photo Recon. Squadron.).

Lt. Col. WALTERS was assigned to the Group as Executive Officer, 10 February 1945. Major P. M. RASMUSSEN was assigned as Group Operations Officer replacing Lt. Col. H. E. McAFEE. Capt. J. H. TALBOT was relieved as Ass't Group Adjutant and assigned Group Adjutant. Capt. D. D. LIMING was placed on DS from Hq. Seventh Air Force to act as Group Ordnance Officer replacing Lt. WYATT who was transferred. (The above duty assignments are included in Special Orders #9-16, this headquarters, for the month of February - Incl. 8). 1st Lt. P. C. V. EDWINS, Group Weather Officer, was ordered to Oahu to attend an advanced weather course. M/Sgt. DeNure, Group Armament Inspector, returned to the mainland to attend AAF Air Inspectors School at Orlando, Florida.

On 23 February, Colonel SANDERS, Commanding Officer, 318th Fighter Group, was awarded the Legion of Merit (Incl. 6); and the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, and Oak Leaf Cluster were awarded to fifty-two other officers of the Group. (Incl. 7). Major General R. W. DOUGLASS JR., Commanding General, Seventh Air Force, made the presentations. Also on the staff were Brigadier General E. R. MOORE, Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, and Colonel. R. J. ERICKSON, Adjutant General, Seventh Air Force. Lt. Col. WALTERS, Execu-

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HISTORY OF 318TH FIGHTER GROUP - FEBRUARY INSTALLMENT --- CONTINUED

tive Officer, 318th Fighter Group, was commander of the two hundred troops that participated in the ceremony.

The 15th Group staged through Kagman Point Field enroute to Iwo Jima. Officers and Men were quartered in the 364th Service Group area. The officers were fed at the consolidated mess hall of the 318th Fighter Group and the Enlisted Men ate with the Service Group. P-51s of the 15th Group were assigned areas with the three squadrons of the 318th Group. (Incl. 9). Some of the problems (other than sweating out longer chow and PX lines) occasioned by this increase in personnel and equipment are discussed in the Engineering Section notes.

STAFF SECTION NOTES: -

The combined Command, S - 2, and S - 3 section journals are included with the Staff Section Notes.

EXECUTIVE: -

Upon assuming duties as Executive Officer of the Group, Lt. Col. WALTERS visited all organizations of this Group, reviewed memorandums, regulations, T.R.'s, General Orders of AAFPOA and Seventh Air Force, including those of the Army Garrison Force, visited the 364th Service Group, and in general became oriented with the functions of that unit. A meeting was held by the Squadron Executive Officers for discussion of personnel and supply problems. The Squadrons were also contacted in regard to coordinating administrative and supply activities. Group Staff and Squadron Executive Officers met to discuss intelligence, supply, and ordnance problems. Seventh Air Force and Island Command staff officers were contacted for familiarization of their activities and services available to the 318th Fighter Group.

S - 4 SECTION: -

The amount of traffic on the coral runway necessitates continued maintenance.

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