

Official History

Official History of the 38th Bomb Group CONSTITUTED as the 38th Bombardment Group (Medium) on 20 Nov. 1940 ACTIVATED on 15 Jan. 1941 Trained with the B-18, B-25, and B-26 aircraft. The ground echelon moved to Australia, Jan-Feb. 1942, while the air echelon remained in the US for further training. Air echelons of two squadrons arrived in Hawaii in May 1942 and took part in the Battle of Midway; they did not rejoin the group and eventually were reassigned. Air echelons of the other squadrons arrived in Australia in Aug. 1942.

Assigned to Fifth AF and equipped with B-25's, the group operated from bases in Australia, New Guinea, and Biak, Sept. 1942-Oct. 1944, attacking Japanese airfields, shipping and supporting ground forces in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago.

Major Ralph Cheli was awarded the Medal of Honor for action on 18 August, 1943. While leading the 405th Squadron to attack a heavily defended airdrome on New Guinea, his plane was severely hit by enemy fire. Rather than disrupt the formation, Major Cheli remained in position and led the attack on the target before his bomber crashed into the sea. (He was taken prisoner and killed in the Rabaul area later) The group was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for bombing and strafing Japanese troops and fortification on Cape Gloucester, New Britain, December 1943, preparatory to the Allied invasion. Received another DUC for two missions over New Guinea, 16 & 17 June, 1944, against Japanese airfields, merchant ships and naval vessels. Moved to the Moluccas in October 1944 and bombed airfields, ground installations, harbors, and shipping in the southern Philippines in support of the US invasion of Leyte. Struck a large enemy convoy in Ormoc Bay in November 1944 to prevent the landing of reinforcements, being awarded a DUC for the mission. After moving to the Philippines in Jan. 1945, supported US ground forces on Luzon, bombed industries on Formosa, and attacked shipping along the China coast. Stationed temporarily on Palawan in June 1945 for participation in the pre-invasion bombing of Japanese installations on Borneo. Moved to Okinawa in July 1945 and conducted several attacks on industries, railways and shipping in southern Japan. Moved to Japan in Nov. 1945 as part of Far East Air Forces. Re-designated the 38th Bombardment Group (Light) in May 1945. Equipped with Douglas A-26 aircraft. INACTIVATED in the Far East on 1 Jan. 1949. ACTIVATED in France on 1 Jan. 1953. Assigned to United States Forces in Europe. Equipped with B-26 and later with B-57 aircraft. SQUADRONS: 69th: 1941-1943. 70th: 1941-1943. 71st: 1941-1949. 405th: 1942-1949. 822nd: 1943-1946. 823rd: 1943-1946. STATIONS: Langley Field, VA, 15 Jan. 1941; Jackson AAB, MS, June 1941 to 18 Jan. 1942; Doomben Field, Australia, 25 Feb. 1942; Ballarat, Australia, 8 March 1942; Amberley Field, Australia, 30 April 1942; Eagle Farms, Australia, 7 August 1942; Breddan Field, Australia, 7 August 1942; Townsville, Australia, 30 September 1942; Port Moresby, New Guinea, October 1942; Nadzab, New Guinea, 4 March 1944; Biak, 1 October 1944; Morotai, 15 October 1944; Lingayen, Luzon, Philippines, 29 Jan. 1945; Okinawa, 25 July 1945; Itazuke, Japan, 22 November 1945; Itami, Japan, 26 October 1945-inactivated April 1949. COMMANDERS: Lt. Col. Robert D. Knapp, 15 Jan. 1941; Col. Fay R. Upthegrove, 18 Jan. 1942-unknown; Lt. Col. Brian O'Neill, 19 Oct. 1942; Lt. Col. Lawrence Tanberg, 1 Oct. 1942; Lt. Col. Carl C. Lausman, July 1944; Maj. Howard M. Paquin, 18 Aug. 1944; Lt. Col. Edward M. Gavin, 9 Nov. 1944; Lt. Col. Edwin H. Hawes, 16 March 1945; Lt. Col. Vernon D. Torgerson, 9 Aug. 1945; Lt. Col. Bruce T. Marston, 12 Sept. 1945. CAMPAIGNS: Air Offensive, Japan; China Defensive; Papua; New Guinea; Bismarck Archipelago; Western Pacific; Leyte; Southern Philippines; China Offensive. DECORATIONS: Distinguished Unit Citations: Papua, New Guinea, Sept. 1942, 23 Jan. 1943; New Britain, 24-26 Dec. 1943; New Guinea, 16-17 June 1944; Leyte, 10 Nov. 1944; Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.