

345th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (TACTICAL)



MISSION

LINEAGE

345th Bombardment Group (Medium) constituted, 3 Sep 1942

Activated, 8 Sep 1942

Inactivated, 29 Dec 1945

Redesignated 345th Bombardment Group (Tactical) and activated, 19 Jul 1954

STATIONS

Columbia AAB, SC, 8 Sep 1942

Walterboro AAFld, SC, 6 Mar-19 Apr 1943

Port Moresby, New Guinea, 5 Jun 1943

Dobodura, New Guinea, 18 Jan 1944

Nadzab, New Guinea, 16 Feb 1944

Biak, Jul 1944

Leyte, 12 Nov 1944

Dulag, Leyte, Dec 1944

Tacloban, Leyte, 1 Jan 1945

San Marcelino, Luzon, 13 Feb 1945

Clark Field, Luzon, 12 May 1945

Ie Shima, 25 Jul-10 Dec 1945

Camp Stoneman, CA, 27-29 Dec 1945

Langley AFB, VA, 19 Jul 1954-8 Oct 1957

ASSIGNMENTS

Fifth Air Force
Tactical Air Command

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-25

B-57

COMMANDERS

Col Jarred V. Crabb, 11 Nov 1942

Col Clinton U. True, 19 Sep 1943

Col Chester A. Coltharp, 24 Jun 1944

Col Glenn A. Doolittle, 28 Jun 1945-unkn

Col John G. Napier, 19 Jul 1954

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Japan

China Defensive

New Guinea

Bismarck Archipelago

Western Pacific

Leyte

Luzon

Southern Philippines

China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

Rabaul, New Britain, 2 Nov 1943

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

EMBLEM

On a disc azure, an orle argent, surmounting all the head, in profile, of an Apache, proper, wearing a feathered headdress of the second, with markings gules, and a string of animal's teeth of the second. (Approved, 21 May 1954)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

AIR APACHES

OPERATIONS

Entered combat on 30 Jun 1943. Operations until Jul 1944 included Bombing and strafing Japanese airfields and installations in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago; attacking shipping in the McCluer Gulf, Ceram Sea, and Bismarck Sea; supporting ground forces in the Admiralties; dropping supplies to ground troops; and flying courier and reconnaissance missions in the area. Received a DUG for a series of attacks against flak positions, shore installations, and barracks at Rabaul, New Britain, on 2 Nov 1943. Operated from Biak, Jul-Nov 1944, striking airfields and shipping in the southern Philippines and the Celebes. In Nov 1944 moved to the Philippines where targets included Japanese airfields and communications on Luzon, industries and communications on Formosa, and shipping along the China coast. After moving to Ie Shima in Jul 1945, flew some missions over Kyushu and the Sea of Japan. Returned to the US in Dec 1945.

It's no accident that the newest bombardment group in the Air Force is manned by personnel with a higher experience level than any other group in the Air Force. The 345th Bombardment group (Training) on the 19th of July 1954, which was charged with the training of B-26 crews for Korean operations. Due to this training commitment the 4400th had a high priority for obtaining personnel returning from Korea. As a result a large percentage of the unit, from Group Commander John G. Napier on down, has been combat tested in his own specialty.

Although the 345th "Air Apaches" laid dormant for several years they created an immortal memory in the mind of every military man with their vital operations in the Pacific during World War II. The bombing and strafing of their B-25s sent a considerable portion of Japanese shipping winding its way to the floor of the ocean.

With the rechristening of the 345th Bombardment Group, Tactical, the name was resting on the shoulders of a group that had trained 1417 B-26 aircrews for the Korean fighting. Although the training of these crews was discontinued with the advent of a truce in Korea, the personnel continue to maintain high proficiency in their night intruder missions.

During May 1951—when crews trained by the 4400th Bomb Group began to trickle into Korea in significant numbers—one aircraft was being lost for every 249 sorties flown with B-26's. By June 1953 only one B-26 was lost for every 1490 sorties flown. Although actual combat experience played a part in the reduction of losses, it is felt that this experience in combination with excellent training received stateside produced the amazing reduction in losses.

The group is now being re-equipped with the new B-57s—a version of the British Canberra. This twin-jet, light bomber is a result of specifications compiled in Korea on what type of light jet bomber would be best suited for the needs of a tactical light bomber unit. These aircraft, combined with T-33's, are being used for the transition of piston driven aircraft pilots to jet.

These B-57Bs of the 345th Bomb Group are on the break for landing at their home base, Langley AFB, Virginia. Their red tail stripes denoted the 500th Bomb Squadron with the Air Apache

insignia of the 345th Bomb Group made famous in the Pacific during World War II. The first B-57Bs were issued to this Group

After three short years with these B-57s in tactical bomb groups, the units were programmed to be phased out. The 38th was the first to begin by ferrying their aircraft back to the U.S. in early 1958. Soon afterwards, as of 1 April 1958, the 461st at Blytheville was also deactivated. No sooner had the B-57 bomber force been removed from Europe than a threat to peace developed in Lebanon. To provide a show of force, B-57s from the 345th Bomb Group at Langley were deployed within a three hour notice in July 1958, for Turkey, as part of Composite Air Strike Force 'Bravo.' Once in place at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, nothing happened, but they remained there over three months, and ready for any action.

On the other side of the world, another crisis erupted in the Taiwan Straits. Again the 345th was called upon for support, and 12 or more B-57s were deployed to Okinawa on 29 August 1958. Although B-57s of the 3rd Bomb Wing were close at hand in Japan, world tension kept them tied to their assigned strategic targets in that part of the world. For this time period, the strength of two squadrons of Canberras from the same 345th Bomb Group in the U.S. were sent off in opposite directions on tactical operations and nearly met on the other side of the world. When the dust settled, the 345th was disbanded on 25 June 1959, leaving only the 3rd Bomb Wing to survive for nearly another five years as the only tactical bomber wing within the USAF. Its existence seemed essential, however, as its primary mission was a SIOP (Single Integrated Operations Plan) commitment for 'Quick Strikes' against strategic targets on the mainland of China, North Korea and Russia. Since nuclear weapons could not be maintained in Japan, the 3rd Bomb Wing set up a rotation of aircrews to stand alert at Kunsan, (K-8) Korea, with nuclear armed B-57s which were ready to be launched against preplanned targets, and to be airborne within 15min notice. At first, alerts lasted for a month at a time as each of the three squadrons took a turn, but soon changed to a two week crew by crew rotation. This continued for an agonizing period from August 1958 to 2 April 1964. Approximately one-third of the wing was at Kunsan all the time, which meant for the air and ground crews, one-third of their time was spent away from their families living in Japan. I know, for I had my share of deployments to 'Pad C' at K-8 for the last year of this period.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 2 Mar 2012

Updated: 5 Apr 2018

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit yearbook. *405 Fighter Bomber Wing, 1954*. Army and Navy Publishing Co. Inc., Baton Rouge, LA. 1954.