

445 OPERATIONS GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

445 Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 20 Mar 1943
Activated, 1 Apr 1943
Redesignated 445 Bombardment Group, Heavy, 20 Aug 1943
Inactivated, 12 Sep 1945
Redesignated 445 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy, 13 May 1947
Activated in the Reserve, 12 Jul 1947
Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949
Redesignated 445 Fighter Bomber Group, 24 Jun 1952
Activated in the Reserve, 8 Jul 1952
Redesignated 445 Troop Carrier Group, Medium, 6 Sep 1957
Inactivated, 25 Sep 1958
Redesignated 445 Military Airlift Group, 31 Jul 1985
Redesignated 445 Operations Group, 1 Aug 1992
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Aug 1992
Inactivated, 1 May 1994
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Oct 1994

STATIONS

Gowen Field, ID, 1 Apr 1943
Wendover Field, UT, 8 Jun 1943
Sioux City AAB, IA, 8 Jul-20 Oct 1943
Tibbenham, England, 4 Nov 1943-28 May 1945

Ft Dix, NJ, 9 Jun-12 Sep 1945
McChord Field (later, AFB), WA, 12 Jul 1947-27 Jun 1949
Buffalo, NY, 8 Jul 1952
Niagara Falls Muni Aprt, NY, 15 Jun 1955
Memphis Muni Aprt, TN, 16 Nov 1957-25 Sep 1958
Norton AFB, CA, 1 Aug 1992
March AFB, CA, 1 Jul 1993-1 May 1994
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 1 Oct 1994

ASSIGNMENTS

II Bomber Command, 1 Apr 1943
Second Air Force, 6 Oct 1943
Eighth Air Force, c. 2 Nov 1943
VIII Bomber Command, 5 Nov 1943
2 Bombardment Division, 9 Nov 1943
2 Combat Bombardment Wing, Nov 1943
Air Transport Command, 9 Jun-12 Sep 1945
305 Bombardment Wing (later, 305 Air Division), 12 Jul 1947-27 Jun 1949
445 Fighter Bomber (later, 445 Troop Carrier) Wing, 8 Jul 1952-25 Sep 1958
445 Airlift Wing, 1 Aug 1992-1 May 1994
445 Airlift Wing, 1 Oct 1994

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-24, 1943-1945
AT-6, 1947-1949
AT-11, 1947-1949
B-29, 1947-1949
T-6, 1952-1955
F-51, 1953-1954
F-80, 1953-1956
F-84, 1955-1957
C-119, 1957-1958
C-141, 1992-1994
C-141, 1994-2006
C-5, 2006
C-17, 2011

COMMANDERS

Col Robert H. Terrill, Apr 1943
Col William W. Jones, 25 Jul 1944-12 Sep 1945
Col John Cerny, 1947-1949
Unkn, 8 Jul 1952-1954
Lt Col William G. Blum, 1954
Lt Col Maurice R. Patterson, 1957

Unkn, 16 Nov 1957-25 Sep 1958
Col David B. Walker, 1 Aug 1992
Lt Col Timothy J. Wrighton, 5 Jan-1 Apr 1994
Apparently not manned, 1 Apr-1 May 1994
Col Louis D. Wright, 1 Oct 1994
Unkn, 27 Mar-2 May 1998
Col James F. Blackman, 3 May 1998
Col Roger M. Gallet
Col David B. Walker, 1 Aug 1992
Lt Col Timothy J. Wrighton, 5 Jan-c. 1 Apr 1994
None (not manned), 1 Apr-1 May 1994
Col Louis D. Wright, 1 Oct 1994
Unkn, 27 Mar-2 May 1998
Col James F. Blackman, 3 May 1998
Col Roger M. Gallet, 15 Apr 2007

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Gotha, Germany, 24 Feb 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
1 Oct 1999-30 Sep 2001
1 Jan 2008-31 Dec 2009

French Croix de Guerre with Palm

EMBLEM

Azure, a snorting bison, proper, winged argent, with streaks of fire proper, issuing from his horns and nostrils, in base three stars of the third. (Approved, 7 Sep 1955)

Group will use the wing emblem with the group designation in the scroll.

MOTTO

THE BISON WING

OPERATIONS

Trained in the US with B-24 Liberators before moving to England, Oct-Dec 1943, for service with Eighth Air Force.

An advanced echelon of staff officers took off from La Guardia Field, New York, on 15 October 1943 and landed at Prestwick, Scotland, on the following day. Members reported to the Eighth Air Force Headquarters in London.

The ground echelon of the component squadrons traveled by train to Camp Shanks, New York. They boarded the HMS Queen Mary on 27 October and landed in Scotland on 2 November 1943. From there they entrained for their permanent station at Tibenham, England.

The actor, James Stewart, a Captain in the Army Air Forces in 1943, was appointed Commanding Officer of the 703 Bombardment Squadron in August 1943. In March he was transferred from the 445 Group to a new assignment.

In April 1943, the air echelon was sent to the AAF School of Applied Tactics Orlando, Florida, for combat training.

The Air echelon moved by squadrons to Morrison Field, Florida. From there, they flew to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico; Waller Field, Trinidad; Belem and Natal, Brazil; Dakar, French West Africa; Marrakesh, French Morocco; and Newquay, England. The squadrons arrived at Tibenham between 17 November 1943 and 21 December 1943.

After a short period of training in the United Kingdom, the 445 Bombardment Group became operational on 13 December 1943, when fifteen aircraft bombed U-boat installations at Kiel, Germany. During the next month the Group participated in eleven missions, most of them directed against German industrial centers such as Bremen, Osnabruck, and Ludwigshafen.

This number of missions was then a record for an Eighth Air Force Bombardment Group during the winter season. Beginning with the attack on Brunswick on 20 February 1944, the 445 took a leading part in an effort to destroy Germany's war-making potential by strategic bombardment during what became known as the "Big Week." On the 24th of the month the 445th sent twenty-five aircraft to Gotha, Germany, to bomb the assembly plant for fighter aircraft parts and the most important source of Me-110s. Enemy aircraft attacked the group continuously for two and one-half hours, but failed to prevent its bombers from reaching the target.

Thirteen aircraft were lost to enemy fighters; the Group, was official credited with 21 enemy air planes destroyed. For this exploit, the 445 was commended by Brigadier General Hodges, Commander of the 2d Bombardment Division, and was later awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for its outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on this occasion.

During the next few months the range and number of the 445's operations steadily increased. Missions flown per month rose from 15 in March to 18 in April, to 22 in May, and to 30 in June. Berlin was bombed for the first time on 6 March 1944. In April 1944 the Group began its first "two-mission" days; in May, take-offs and formations were attempted before sunrise with only moderate success. By July 1944 almost all fliers who constituted the original group had already completed their tours, and, with the exception of a few who were given staff positions, had been assigned elsewhere. Replacements were numerous, and the number of combat crews assigned to the Group steadily increased.

For the 445, the invasion of the Continent in June 1944, signified a shift from strategic to tactical bombing, in direct support of American and British ground troops in Normandy. On D-Day itself, 6 Jun, the Group went on four missions: two to St. Lo, one to Caen, and one to Hamel-au-Petre, all near the invasion coast. Local enemy airfields and areas in front of Allied troops were frequently attacked. The Group flew its 100th mission on 13 June 1944, just six months after its first mission, and, in recognition thereof, was cited by Major General Hodges. Thirty-one missions were flown in June 1944.

In July, the 445 returned to the bombing of strategic targets, which was to be its primary mission for the remainder of the war. Oil refineries, chemical work, airplane engine factories, railway centers, and ball-bearing factories were frequent objectives. Enemy airfields and rocket installations were also hit. In August 1944, the 445 led the 2d Bombardment Division in bombing accuracy for the third successive month.

The Group engaged in the most costly raid of its history in September of that year. While making a run on Gottingen, northeast of Kassel, which was the assigned target, the unit became separated from the bomber stream and fighter escort. Shortly after releasing its bombs, the Group was set upon by over one hundred German FW-190s; within less than five minutes, twenty-five out of a total of thirty-seven bombers were downed. It had been the first time since May 1944 that the 445 had encountered enemy fighter opposition.

In the fall and winter of 1944, the 445 flew strategic missions to Germany exclusively for distinguished performance of duty in combat from 13 December 1943 to 25 October 1944" the Group was commended by Major General Kepner, Commanding General of the 2d Bombardment Division, in December 1944. The unit flew its two hundredth mission 10 December 1944 - to Birrger, Germany. Because of poor weather, operational activity lessened during these months.

Of twenty-eight missions flown in December 1944 and January 1945, only five bombings were visual. The critical situation brought about by the "Battle of the Bulge" resulted in another

diversion of targets; during this operation the Group bombed communications centers in the Metz area. By February 1945 the 445 was again concentrating on missions to the heart of Germany.

On some of these, sabotage incendiaries were dropped, with leaflets describing in detail the uses to which the bombs could be put. In March 194 the number of missions flown by the 445 increased sharply.

The flight of 5 March marked the 15th consecutive mission in as many days, an all-time record for the Group. When, on the 24th of the month, American ground forces crossed the Rhine River, aircraft of the 445 dropped food, medical supplies, and ammunition to airborne troops which had previously landed there.

The 445 Bombardment Group again led the Division in bombing efficiency, this time for operations in 1945. On 14 and 15 April its bombers attacked German troops and installations at Royan, France. By continuing to hold this town at the mouth of the Gironde, the Germans were denying the Allies the use of the port of Bordeaux. This raid marked the first use of napalm by the 445. The bombing was effective, and French forces soon occupied the region.

The 445's last mission of the war was flown two weeks later, against Salzburg Austria. In its seventeen months of operations, the 445 Bombardment Group was reported to have flown 280 missions, dropped 16,262 tons of bombs, and destroyed 80 enemy aircraft.

December 13, 1943 was a red letter day for the 445 when 15 planes were put into the air for the first of 280 air strikes over Nazi targets including Kiel, Bremen, Gotha, Siracourt, Nuremberg, Hanover and Berlin.

On April 25, 1945, 19 B-24 Liberators hit the target at Salzburg, Austria for the 445 Bomb Group's final air strike of the war, and in June, 1945 the 445 Group came home with a Distinguished Service Cross, a Legion of Merit, 13 Silver Stars, 60 Bronze Stars, 1,041 Distinguished Flying Crosses plus 51 Oak Leaf Clusters, 14 Purple Hearts and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Purple Heart, not including Purple Hearts awarded posthumously, 5 French Croix de Guerres and the Presidential Unit Citation. Their gunners had accounted for a total of 80 Nazi aircraft destroyed in the air during bombing missions.

The 445 was inactivated and returned to its original "paper" status on September 12, 1945. Seven years later, in July 1952, the 445 was reactivated as an Air Force Reserve Fighter-Bomber Wing of the Continental Air Command 1st First Air Force, with a total strength of 150 officers and 50 airmen.

Once again the unit experienced growing pains, forcing the emergence from a "paper" status to an active unit. This time the Wing was equipped with a proven top fighter aircraft of World War Two, the P-51 "Mustang".

On 20 Oct 1943 ground echelon moved Camp Shanks, NY. and embarked on Queen Mary, 26 Oct 1943, sailing next day. Arrived Clyde 2 Nov 1943. Air echelon departed Sioux City late Oct 1943 and flew to UK via southern route, Florida, Puerto Rico, Brazil, West Africa.

Entered combat on 13 Dec 1943 by attacking U-boat installations at Kiel, Germany. Operated primarily as a strategic bombardment organization until the war ended, striking industrial targets, airfields, ammunition plants, oil facilities, and other military targets.

Participated in the Allied campaign against the German aircraft industry during Big Week, 20-25 Feb 1944, being awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation for attacking an aircraft assembly plant at Gotha, Germany, on 24 Feb. Occasionally flew interdiction and support missions. Helped to prepare for the invasion of Normandy by bombing airfields, V-weapon sites, and other targets; attacked shore installations on D-Day. Supported ground forces at St Lo by striking enemy defenses in Jul 1944.

Bombed German communications during the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944-Jan 1945. Early on 24 Mar 1945, dropped food, medical supplies, and ammunition to troops that landed near Wesel during the airborne assault across the Rhine; that afternoon flew a bombing mission to the same area, hitting a landing ground at Stormede.

On occasion dropped propaganda leaflets and hauled gasoline to France. Awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm by the French government for operations in the theater from Dec 1943 to Feb 1945. Flew last combat mission on 25 Apr 1945.

Redeployed USA May/Jun. 45. First aircraft left Tibenham 17 May 1945, departed UK 20 May 1945. Ground echelon left 28 May 1945; 703 BS sailing on USAT Argentine from Southampton and other squadrons on USAT Cristobal at Bristol. Both ships arrived New York, 8 Jun 1945. Personnel 30 days Rest and Recuperation. Group established Fort Dix, NJ. and inactivated there 12 Sep 1945.

First Mission: 13 Dec 1943
Last Mission: 25 Apr 1945
Total Missions: 282
Total Credit Sorties: 7145
Total Bomb Tonnage: 16,732
Aircraft Missing in action: 108
Other operational Losses: 25
Enemy claims: 89/31/37

Trained in the Reserve as a very heavy Bombardment Group, 1947-1949 and as a Fighter-Bomber Group, 1952-1957.

Redesignated as a Troop Carrier Group in Sep 1957 and began training in C-119 aircraft. In mid-November 1957 the Group was separated from the parent wing, which moved to Georgia while the group and two squadrons moved to Tennessee.

From 1 Oct 1994, trained for and flew strategic airlift missions worldwide, performing channel flights and special assignment airlift missions. Participated in various contingency and humanitarian operations and training exercises. Also tested the laser detection and ranging (LADAR) system.

Activated at Wright-Patterson AFB on 1 Oct 1994. Since 1994, trained for and flew strategic airlift missions worldwide. Performed channel flights and special assignment airlift missions as well as participating in various contingency and humanitarian operations and training exercises. Also tested the laser detection and ranging (LADAR) system. Supported Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, 2001-2005.

USAF Unit Histories

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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.