

## 864 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, HEAVY



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

864 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 14 Sep 1943  
Activated, 1 Dec 1943  
Inactivated, 6 Jan 1946  
Redesignated 864 Strategic Missile Squadron, 7 Jan 1958  
Activated, 15 Jan 1958  
Redesignated 864 Technical Training Squadron, 15 Apr 1959  
Discontinued, 1 Jun 1960  
Redesignated 864 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 15 Nov 1962  
Organized, 1 Feb 1963  
Discontinued and inactivated, 2 Apr 1966

### STATIONS

Wendover Field, UT, 1 Dec 1943  
Mountain Home AAFld, ID, 14 Apr-1 Jun 1944  
Barking Sands TH, 15 Jun 1944  
Angaur, Palau Islands, 30 Sep 1944  
Yontan, Okinawa, 24 Jun-13 Dec 1945  
Vancouver, WA, 3-6 Jan 1946  
Huntsville, AL, 15 Jan 1958-1 Jun 1960  
Sheppard AFB TX, 1 Feb 1963

### ASSIGNMENTS

494 Bombardment Group, 1 Dec 1943-4 Jan 1946  
1 Missile Division, 15 Jan 1958

704 Strategic Missile Wing, 23 Feb 1958 (attached to 1 Missile Division, 1 Nov 1958)  
1 Missile Division, 1 Jul 1959  
Department of the Air Force, 1 Jun 1960  
Strategic Air Command, 15 Nov 1962  
494 Bombardment Wing, 1 Feb 1963

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-24, 1944-1945  
Jupiter, 1958-1960  
B-52, 1963

### **COMMANDERS**

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

Air Offensive, Japan  
Eastern Mandates  
Western Pacific  
Leyte; Luzon  
Southern Philippines  
Ryukyus  
China Offensive  
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

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

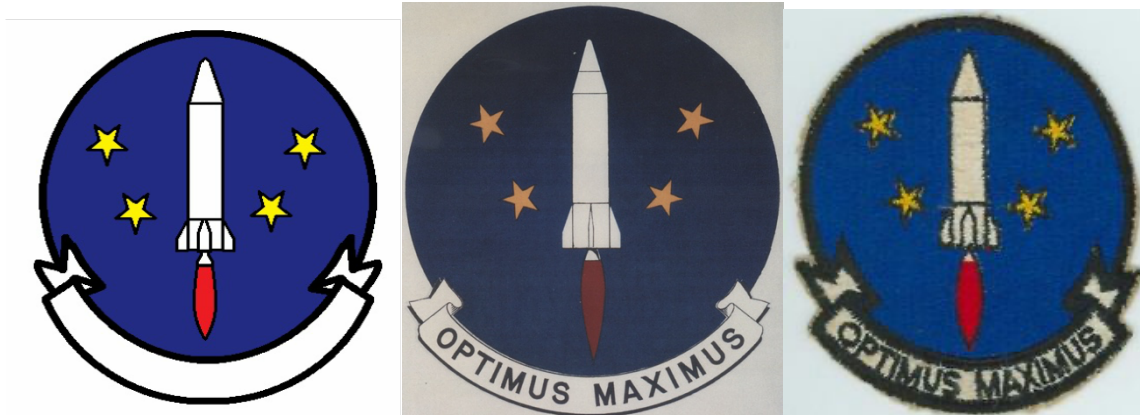
#### **Decorations**

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

### **EMBLEM**



## 864<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Heavy emblems



864<sup>th</sup> Strategic Missile Squadron emblem: On an Air Force blue disc a white missile pointing upward, trailing red exhaust to base, between four Air Force golden yellow stars forming a "V" pattern, two in dexter, and two in sinister, outlines and details black throughout. **SIGFICANCE:** The missile indicates the primary mission and symbolizes this unit as the first ballistic missile squadron in the USAF. The stars in the form of a "V" represent victory, and the motto, a term used by the ancient Romans in referring to their god, Jupiter, expresses pride in the outfit. The emblem was designed by TSgt Leroy Ford, a member of the unit. (Approved, 7 Nov 1958)

### **MOTTO**

OPTIMUS MAXIMUS, Best and Greatest

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

The history of the 864 Bombardment Squadron dates back to 14 September 1943, when the unit was constituted by the War Department. The squadron was activated at Wendover Field, Utah, on 1 December 1943 and assigned to the 494th Bombardment Group, Second Air Force. In the middle of January 1944, the air echelon moved to the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida, for instruction in tactical operations with B-24s. Later in the month, the ground echelon was transferred, without personnel and equipment, to Orlando, where it was manned. In February, the unit returned to Wendover, and in April it moved to Mountain Home Army Air Field, Idaho, where it continued its preparations for combat.

After processing at Lincoln Army Air Field, Nebraska, the men of the air echelon flew the squadron's B-24s, via Fairfield Army Air Field, California, to Barking Sands Army Air Field Hawaii, in June. In the meantime, the ground echelon had proceeded to Fort Lawton, Washington, and had sailed for Hawaii aboard the SS Mexico, arriving at Barking Sands on 15 June 1944. Assigned to the Seventh Air Force, the unit trained for active service in the Central Pacific.

On 17 August 1944, the ground echelon, consisting of 7 officers and 199 enlisted men, departed from Barking Sands for Angaur, Palau Islands, aboard the SS Sea Sturgeon. It arrived at its destination on 30 September 1944. While the ground echelon set up the new airfield, the air echelon remained in Hawaii to continue its training. Then, between 15 and 23 November 1944, the air echelon consisting of 67 officers and 175 enlisted men, with 14 B-24s, joined the ground echelon at Angaur. As soon as the unit's first planes arrived at Angaur, the squadron began to make orientation flights and performed shakedown missions.

The 864th Squadron received its "baptism of fire" in some missions against objectives in the Palau Islands and Yap. The unit flew its first combat mission on 22 November 1944 when seven of its B-24s, together with aircraft of the 866th Squadron, attacked Yap and Arakabesan. The squadron's Liberators returned to Arakabesan on the 23d and 24th, striking at barracks and radio facilities. On 25 November the unit hit Diklom airdrome in northern Mindanao, 1,800 miles round trip from Angaur.

By December 1944, the squadron's preparations for an active part in the Philippine campaign were over. In support of U.S. operations in Leyte the unit began to devote its efforts almost entirely to missions against enemy air installations in the Visayan Islands and in Luzon. Large scale attacks were carried out primarily against the airdromes at Legaspi and Dulan on southern Luzon, Masbate Island, Cebu, and Negros.

Later in December, as a prelude to General MacArthur's invasion in the Lingayen area on 9 January 1945, the 864th began participating in large scale attacks against the enemy's airfields in central Luzon. Targets included Clark Field, Grace Park, and Legaspi. The unit was limited to strikes on alternate days because on the return flights the B-24s had to stage through the air base at Tacloban. The heavy concentration of guns defending Clark Field sent many of the B-24H's linking back to Tacloban riddled with flak. After the invasion the unit supported the ground forces in their drive against a stubborn enemy. Whenever weather permitted, the 864th raided the warehouse areas and airdromes on Negros Island, supply dumps and defense positions at Bamban on Luzon, gun emplacements on Corregidor, and barracks areas at Arakabesan in the Palau Islands.

During the early part of February, the squadron participated in the softening up of Corregidor prior to airborne and amphibious assaults on that enemy stronghold. In order to help clear the way, the unit hit gun emplacements, anti-aircraft positions, storage tanks, docks, and personnel areas. After Corregidor had been taken by U.S. Forces, the squadron made a series of attacks against troop concentrations and airdromes on the eastern coast of Mindanao. During strikes against the runways at Libby and Sasa airdromes on 27 and 28 February, respectively, the squadron accomplished excellent bombing results. More than 10 direct hits were made on the assigned portion of the runway at Libby and more than 15 at Sasa.

By March 1945, the squadron had shifted to targets in the Zamboanga area in the extreme southwestern corner of Mindanao. Ground defenses in that area had to be neutralized prior to landing operations there.

After several strikes against runways and installations at San Roque and Calarian airdromes west of Zamboanga City, attacks were made against coastal defenses in the same area. Following the invasion on 10 March, the 864th began a series of raids against personnel and supply concentrations near Buayan airdrome in the Sarengani Bay area. Later the squadron was called upon to soften up targets for ground forces "mopping up" in the Philippines. Primary emphasis was placed against enemy positions in landing areas both north and south of Cebu City, Cebu Island.

During most of April the unit continued to support the Eighth Army on Mindanao, hitting airdromes and installations at Bunawan, Cotabare, Kabacan, Sapakan, and Tiggato. Commencing on the 19th of April and continuing until 11 May the squadron attempted to neutralize anti-aircraft batteries at Arakabesan and on Koror in the Palau Islands. On 28 April, a number of crews were dispatched to Guam to work with the 11th Bombardment Group. Those crews participated in attacks against airfields on Marcus and Truk Islands from which the enemy carried out reconnaissance and shipping strikes.

Operations were reduced to a minimum after mid-May as the squadron commenced training in preparation for strikes against the Japanese homeland. During June 1945, when the unit began moving to Okinawa, a few strikes were staged from Anguar against Japanese positions in the northern Palau Islands.

Having completed its move to Okinawa in July 1945, the 864th Squadron began operations against military installations in Japan and in the Shanghai area of China. The primary objective was to knock out enemy airfields, but the unit also hit towns, bridges, marshalling yards, and harbors.

On 5 August, the 864th Squadron initiated its first strike with incendiary bombs. At that time the unit, together with the other squadrons of the 494th Group, dropped a total of 288 500-pound bombs on Tarumizu, Kyushu, leaving behind a fire-saturated target area. Other fire raids were carried out against Kagoshima, Kumamoto, Miyazaki, and Kurume, interspersed with those raids were strikes against airdromes on Kyushu and Honshu. The 864th flew its last combat mission on 12 August 1945 when its B-24s hit Hatsuyama West airdrome on Shikoku.

After the end of hostilities the squadron transported troops and conducted courier service between Okinawa and the Philippine Islands. The unit sailed for the United States aboard the Sea Flyer on 13 December 1945 and arrived at Portland, Oregon, on 3 January 1946. Three days later, on 6 January, the squadron was inactivated at Vancouver Barracks, Washington.

Approximately 12 years later, on 7 January 1958, the unit was redesignated the 864th Strategic Missile Squadron. It was activated at the Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama, on 15 January 1958 and was assigned to the 1st Missile Division of the Strategic Air Command.

The squadron became concerned with the JUPITER program. Development of the JUPITER as an

intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) had been a responsibility of the US Army, but on 28 February 1958, the Secretary of Defense assigned responsibility for research and development of all land based IRBMs to the US Air Force.

During 1958, the 864th functioned principally as a cadre of staff personnel becoming acquainted with the problems and ramifications of the JUPITER program, later the 864th supervised the training of personnel for operations with the missile. The 864th was scheduled to be sent overseas but conflicting views and philosophies within the Department of Defense concerning the respective merits of the JUPITER and THOR systems and related matters resulted in several slippages of the projected deployment. Training continued, however, and personnel who had completed the training were temporarily sent to other assignments. Further delays were caused by difficulties in obtaining agreements with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations concerning IRBM units. Because of political considerations, the unit was redesignated the 864th Technical Training Squadron on 15 April 1959.

On 26 March 1959 the Government of the United States and the Government of Italy signed an agreement concerning the deployment of JUPITER squadrons in Italy, and an agreement between USAF and the Italian Air Force was concluded on 10 August 1959. Soon thereafter deployment plans began to crystalize. The 864th Technical Training Squadron completed training at Redstone Arsenal on 1 September 1959, and the shipment of missiles to Italy began in October. However, fate ruled that the 864th would not deploy. A new squadron to the United States Air Forces in Europe was given mission in Italy. Accordingly, the Strategic Air Command was relieved of this responsibility and the 864th was discontinued at Huntsville on 1 Jun 1960. Some of the personnel trained in the 864 were reassigned to USAFE, some remained in SAC and others were reassigned to the Air Research and Development Command.

On 15 Nov 1962, the unit was redesignated the 864 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy and assigned to the Strategic Air Command. It was organized on 1 Feb 1963 at Sheppard AFB, TX and assigned to the 494 Bombardment Wing, Heavy.

Headquarters SAC activated the 864th Strategic Missile Squadron (IRBM-Jupiter) at the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, Huntsville, Alabama, and assigned it to the 1st Missile Division. This was the first of three SAC Jupiter squadrons activated at the Redstone Arsenal during 1958 (the second, the 865th Strategic Missile Squadron, was activated on 1 June, while the third, the 866th Strategic Missile Squadron was activated on 1 September) in order to carry out the SAC responsibility of training Italian and Turkish crews in the operation of the Jupiter IRBM. 15 JAN 1958

864th Strategic Missile Squadron

Redstone Arsenal

PGM-19 Jupiter, 1958-1960

Provided training for Italian Air Force personnel in the operation and launching of the PGM-19 Jupiter

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USAF Unit Histories  
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Sources

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