

# **8 AIR SERVICE GROUP**

## **MISSION**

## **LINEAGE**

8 Air Base Group activated, 15 Jan 1941  
Redesignated 8 Service Group, 4 Aug 1942  
Redesignated 8 Air Service Group

## **STATIONS**

Langley Field, VA  
Bangor, ME, 5 Dec 1941  
Sydney, Australia, 28 Mar 1942  
Nadzab, New Guinea, 30 Jul 1942

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Far East Air Force Combat Replacement and Training Center, 15 Jun 1944

## **COMMANDERS**

Lt Col John Woodward

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

The 8th Air Base Group was activated on 15 January, 1941, at Langley Field, Virginia, composed of the following units: Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 11<sup>th</sup> Materiel Squadron, and the 7th Air Base Squadron. The period following activation was spent in basic training and routine administration duties. The Group was under strength and was slowly being brought up to allotted tables of organization.

On 4 June 1941, by rail, privately owned conveyance and military motor vehicles, the group moved to Bangor, Maine, to assume control of the Bangor Air Base, then under construction and the next few months after arrival, were spent in basic training. Approximately 10 per cent of the personnel were sent to various Army Special Service Schools for technical training.

On 18 September 1941, orders came through for Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and the 11th Materiel Squadron to go to the North Carolina Maneuvers. The 7th Air Base Squadron to remain at the Bangor Air Base to continue normal operations. A few days prior to this date a small detachment of men, made up from each of the units had departed for the Louisiana Maneuvers.

The units departed for the Carolina Maneuvers by motor convoy on 20 September 1941, being assigned to the Blue Army. Duties were to assume complete operational control of the Knollwood Airport. The Airport was put in serviceable order in a minimum length of time which necessitated installation of tower, engineering, gas service, landing lights, salvage control, operations and many minor constructions. The maneuvers having been successfully completed the two units departed by motor convoy for their home base arriving at Bangor, Maine, on 5 December, 1941.

On the 7th of January, 1942, the 8th Air Base Group was alerted for shipment overseas and the 15th Signal Platoon (AB) was assigned to the Group for overseas shipment. The 7<sup>th</sup> Air Base Squadron was to remain at the base to continue operations. On the morning of 17 February, 1942, the Group consisting of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 11th Materiel Squadron, and the 15th Signal Platoon (AB), departed by rail to port of embarkation at Boston, Massachusetts. On arrival there the organization moved directly on board the "Queen Mary" where the 703rd Ordnance Company (AB) and detachment, 2nd Quartermaster Company (AB) joined the Group.

The route followed was due south to Key West, Florida, where a brief stop was made, then to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, arriving on the morning of 6 March, 1942, where a two day delay was experienced but no personnel allowed ashore. The journey was then resumed, docking at Capetown, Africa, on the morning of 14 March. The following morning found the "Queen Mary" continuing her journey, arriving on the 23rd of March at Fremantle, Australia, where fuel and water was taken aboard and then on to her destination, Sydney, Australia.

The Group arrived in Sydney, Australia, at approximately 1730 hours on 28 March 1942, having spent forty days en route. Upon arrival, all troops were billeted at Randwick Racecourse, Sydney, on 17 April, 1942, the 11th Materiel Squadron moved to the R.A.A.F. Station, Bankstown, New South Wales.

The Group left Australia on 20 July, 1942, aboard the ships Van der Lind and Sea Witch, and arrived in Port Moresby, New Guinea, on the 30th of July.

The trip to New Guinea gave the group its first bombing experience. The ships, while docked in Townsville, were bombed by a couple of Japanese planes. Also upon arrival at Port Moresby, New Guinea, another bombing raid was experienced while debarking. Negligible damage and no casualties were experienced by the raids.

Upon debarking, the Group was assigned a billeting area adjacent to Jackson Strip at which place the unit started functioning as a service group.

On 4th August, 1942, the Group was redesignated the 8th Service Group and the 11th Materiel Squadron redesignated the 11th Service Squadron. For the remainder of the year, 1942, and throughout 1943, the Group continued to function as a Service Group on Jackson Strip, supporting with maintenance three heavy Bombardment Squadrons, one Medium Bombardment Squadron, and one Fighter Squadron, as well as manning and operating Jackson Airdrome, Base operations, Hood Point and Arouna Emergency Landing Strips.

On the 15th of June, 1944, the 8th Service Group was assigned to the newly activated Far East Air Force Combat Replacement and Training Center to perform all echelons of maintenance on the aircraft used by the school in its training program. The Headquarters Squadron only had remained from its original units and thus new units were assigned to the Group.

In the latter part of July, the training center was alerted to move to the base that it occupies at the present time so an advance party was sent out to prepare for the new installation. On 21st August, 1944, the Group set up its new Headquarters and the entire month of August saw movement of equipment to the new base. All equipment and personnel were moved by air.

The 8th Air Service Group Engineering Section is charged with the maintenance, repair and air force supply of all aircraft assigned to the 360th Air Service Group. A central engineering shop area has been inaugurated by using specialized shop personnel and equipment assigned to all of the service squadrons. These shops and the central engineering line perform third and fourth echelon maintenance on all aircraft. A fighter, bomber and miscellaneous flight line is maintained and serviced by two airdrome squadrons and one service squadron, each working on its separate flight line and aircraft assigned to that flight. Each of these squadrons are charged with first and second echelon maintenance as well as acceptance checks and inspections up to and including one hundred hours.

Lumber is a scarce commodity with very meager supplies being received from the outside, so the group set up its own mill to care-for local needs. A site was selected within a deep jungle of extremely large trees, and with personnel selected from each of the units, aided by native boys, cutting was started.

A goal of one and one half million feet was set as a great amount of lumber was needed for construction of warehouses, shops, tent floors, latrines, mess halls, etc., as well as shipment to other installations. This figure has been reached and passed with an overall average of ten thousand feet per day being processed into lumber of suitable dimensions for all types of construction.

Timber Types: Timber of many different types has been identified and cut in this area, ranging from the exceedingly hard and tough Kasi-Kasi (Metrosideros Species, Class I, Hardwood) to extremely light Husisi (Ptero-Cymbium Species, Class 5, Softwood). Pometia Pinnata, a light hardwood called " Taun " by the natives, furnished a large proportion of the lumber cut. This tree has a girth up to 10 feet, bole up to 70 feet, and loggable trees reach a height of 100 feet. Heavy buttresses spread out 7 feet from the ground and extend 15 feet up the stem in grooves. It is a Class 3 Hardwood and provides good building timber. Some cedar and mahogany are to be found in very small amounts.

Cutting Operations: The cutting is done by natives using axes. To cut many of the trees, the natives are forced by the buttresses to erect platforms out of small trees and vines. Many trees are cut as high as 15 feet from the ground. Two enlisted men control the native woods crew and see that trees are topped and spotted for the tractors which haul them to the landing. Landing Operations: In the landing, the logs are cut by power chain saw into 12, 14, 16 and 18 foot lengths depending on the shape of the log and the length lumber required. These are lifted on the logging trucks by means of a gin pole and winch.

Sawmill Operations: Logs are unloaded on the skidway at the mill and are rolled into position on a movable carriage which carries them back and forth past the saw.

The mill is a Number 1, American, Log carriage (16 foot) type, using a 60 inch inserted tooth saw, bottom saw only. A two saw edger, with 16 inch inserted tooth saws, resaws unedged boards.

The function of the Headquarters Medical Section is to maintain Dispensary service for the Headquarters Squadron, and medical administrative functions for all units attached and assigned to the group, and to correlate the medical problems within the command. Medical supply distributing point for all units continues to be a function of the Headquarters Medical Section. Unit dispensaries are well established and are considered adequate for furnishing medical care for the Command.

Air strips of this Station are provided emergency medical care including ambulance service, maintenance of air stations on each strip, and trained enlisted personnel.

The medical supply distributing point has been serving all units in the area. Numerous items unobtainable during the past year have been obtained in sufficient quantities, therefore all supplies are adequate. Climatic conditions have no marked effect on the type of supplies used in this area.

Water is obtained from a branch of a nearby river, and an adequate amount is available. The water is chlorinated for drinking and mess purposes only.

Laundry facilities are adequate.

Messing facilities have been set up by each organization with continuous improvements being made on recommendations of the respective Squadron surgeons.

Adequate medical care is provided all personnel of this Command. Hospitalization, X-Ray, and laboratory facilities are furnished by a general hospital. All officer personnel are adequately trained for the positions they now occupy.

All assigned and attached units of the group have received complete dental service. All prosthetic and X-ray cases are referred to a general hospital for treatment. The usual MD Form 79 is kept on each patient treated, also a dental identification record of all flying personnel within the group. During this period it has not been necessary to call patients for treatment, since sick call provides more than a sufficient number of patients for two dental surgeons. A few cases of Vincent's stomatitis and perichondritis conditions were treated plus a usual amount of adjustments made.

PROP FEATHERING TEST STAND: This instrument was devised to test the operation of Hamilton propellers, and to determine if the propeller will leak at the maximum operating pressures

This band saw is entirely constructed of salvage parts and is used for sawing small circles. Prior to its construction a large band saw was used, and could not adequately handle the various jobs needed.

AFCE TEST PANEL The test panel consists of the various units and instruments that go to make up the O-I Auto Pilot. Units are checked for proper operation after each maintenance check. All equipment can be thoroughly ground checked at the test panel, thus keeping maintenance time to a minimum.

RADIO TRAILER This self-constructed work aid was primarily built as a possible work bench. It has its own source of power with energizer and battery. It carries small, spare parts for radio, and also a drawer for fuses, clamps, insulators, switches, small nuts, etc. The trailer saves many trips between the planes and the shop thus saving many man hours. Salvaged lumber and metal furnished the construction material.

**GENERATOR – VOLTAGE REGULATOR AND REVERSE CURRENT RELAY TESTER** This tester is made up of one C-IB Generator used as a D.C. Motor in this case. Power is supplied either by a C-IB power plant or 4-24 volt batteries. The tester is especially valuable in checking and setting the range and voltage on carbon pile voltage regulators and closing of reverse current relays. It can be also taken out to a plane to check the plane generator system.

**ARMAMENT SHOP** This mechanical aid constructed of a salvaged electric motor from which the armature was removed and bearings installed. A four cycle, one cylinder, gasoline engine is used as a power source. A combination sandstone and wire brush on either end serve to sharpen tools or remove rust from machine guns, and polishing gun parts. Working time on gun cleaning was cut fifty per cent.

The Wayside Chapel was built during the month of October, 1944, and was dedicated on Sunday, November 5, 1944. This is a thatched structure, built by a group of thirty-six natives. It is 25' by 80' and will seat approximately 300. Some of the features of this structure are: a large electric cross in front, a bell in the belfry, an electric cross inside, an altar with a plex-o-glass top having electric lights inside, and indirect lighting on the platform. All services held in the Wayside chapel have been very well attended during this period. Roman Catholic services are held each Sunday morning at 0800 hours. A Following is a schedule of Protestant services conducted by the 8th Air Service Group Chaplain

The male choir, organized in March, has been doing wonderfully well under the direction of the American Red Cross field director. In The outstanding service of this period was the Easter sunrise service, held in the 8th Air Service Group open-air theater, on April 1, 1945. All Protestant Chaplains in the valley participated in this service. Jewish personnel attend services each Friday evening in the chapel of the 247th General Hospital.

Life in the jungles and separated from the comforts of civilian life is not an easy existence. But Yank ingenuity has again come to the fore and created many luxuries that aid in good morale. An old military axiom states, "An army travels on its stomach!" Without good food a soldier is incapacitated to fight more so than if he were without weapons. The mess halls of the group, are regularly inspected for cleanliness to safeguard health. Mess halls are airy and free from obnoxious smells. In addition to food rationed by quartermaster, the men of the group donate a monthly fee, ranging from a half to one pound, to buy fresh meats, eggs, fruits, vegetables and sauces from Australia.

Not too long ago, the only place to obtain a bath was in various mountain streams. With energetic enthusiasm, showers were built with plumbing fixtures. Tanks with sizes from one to five thousand gallon capacity provide the water used in bathing. Tanks are filled regularly from mobile water carriers as well as by pipe from streams and wells. Some units have established heating units with the tanks to provide warm water. Space is provided for dressing and undressing. Removable floor boards cover the floors, thus ensuring cleanliness. To ease the burden of laundering personal cloth in technicians have built laundries. Salvaged sheet metal was bent and welded into shape to form the boilers and tubs. Salvaged motors of various sizes,

were fitted to the tubs to churn the clothes. Water for the boilers is heated in old oil drums outside the laundry building. Each man is assessed a fee of five shillings to half a pound for the work. Profits from the laundry are added to the unit fund.

All units have their own PX's stocked with goods from quartermaster Post Exchange source of supplies. Other luxuries have been added, such as coke machines and refrigerators built from salvaged materials. Ice Cream is made occasionally in the coolers by using Quartermaster issued Ice Cream powder. Organizations have constructed ice boxes, cooled by issued ice for the purpose of cooling the men's monthly issue of beer. Added together, these comforts, built by the men, for the men, create a better attitude for all concerned in circumstances far removed from the average individual's former life.

The Group Special Service Section has stressed a diversified athletic program in keeping with the directives from higher Headquarters. Shortly after the arrival of all units of the group at this base the main problem that confronted special service was that of suitable athletic facilities. Through initiative and hard work on the part of unit special service personnel the entire area became outstanding in having at the disposal of all personnel excellent athletic facilities. A special service council was formed and since its formation closer contact with each unit has been made possible. The Council consists of one unit special service officer and one unit non-commissioned officer from each organization. The Council meets every Monday morning and various aspects of the athletic program are discussed along with any problems which may confront unit representatives in following the athletic program as devised by Group Special Service.

Group and Unit Leagues were activated in Basketball, Baseball, Softball and Volley Ball. Volley Ball and Basketball Courts were soon equipped with excellent lighting systems which encouraged the personnel of all units to participate in these sports. A great amount of interest has been displayed in softball and the first league, comprised of ten teams, continued for a period of four months. The winner of the Championship was awarded a large shield suitable for the inscription of all names of players of the winning team. Boxing became one of the leading sports in this area soon after the group was settled at its new base. Through proper match-making and expert instructions especially in the novice classes, a first-rate team has been developed which has been most successful in matches with teams from other bases. All training is done in the early morning hours and in the evenings to escape the terrific heat which is not conducive to the training program.

Athletics of all kinds have proven to be most popular and also a great morale factor in this theater. Volley Ball has had the largest turnout in personnel participating in any one sport. The Group League which has ten teams represents about twenty-five per cent of all group personnel actively engaged. Unit leagues have also proven to be most popular with seventy-five per cent of the group participating.

Basketball has finally come into its own. Heretofore the sport was dormant due to the critical shortage of equipment but during the past two months group and unit leagues were formed.

Approximately five per cent of the men in the Group were actively engaged in the Group League and fifty per cent participated in unit leagues.

Baseball has always proven most popular but it is only of late that a Group and Valley League was organized, due to the shortage of equipment. Ten per cent of the men in the group are actively engaged in this sport. Group teams have won every major championship in the Valley and great interest from the player's standpoint as well as the spectators has been shown in every game.

Recreation is a factor to be considered in all special service programs and so, when the group was finally settled at this base, this factor was greatly stressed. Each and every unit constructed suitable day rooms for the enlisted men of their organization. Reading rooms, game rooms with tables and desks for writing purposes have been constructed.

The American Red Cross Enlisted Men's Club has been a gathering place for all men in the area. Sandwiches, Doughnuts, Coffee and Cold Drinks are available in the evenings. Unit swimming, fishing and hunting parties have proven most popular with group personnel and during off-duty hours many men take advantage of the opportunity to go on these trips. Each party is under the supervision of a non-commissioned officer well versed in these sports.

U.S.O. Shows have been most welcome at this base. The group has two theaters capable of handling the largest stage productions, and with suitable seating facilities for hundreds of men. A Dance Orchestra formed of men in the group has added to the color of unit parties. This Orchestra plays at weekly dances, Anniversaries, and Stag parties. WACS and Red Cross girls serve as partners at these gatherings, which are held at unit mess halls and recreation rooms throughout the group.

In December 1944, the information and education section was divorced from Special Services, and sanctioned within the group as follows War Information Centers were established in each unit. The Centers used maps depicting every theater of operation with map aids to form battle lines.

The Group I & E Office sets up a display of maps to be used in Training I & E Non-Coms to set up their maps in a prescribed manner.

A systematized policy was established to promote armed Forces institute and University correspondence courses. Men subscribed to a score of subjects that would help them in their present work as well as anticipated positions in postwar days.

In addition to the correspondence courses, the Section incorporated the "New Guinea University" which covered the following subjects French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Public Speaking, Beginners' Algebra, Book keeping and Accounting, Typing, Refrigeration, Machine Shop, Diesel Engines, Filling Station Management, Psychology and Life and Principles of Business Law.

The number of students in each class ranged from 8 to 64. Classes are held in the evenings from one to two hours. Class rooms consisted of former orderly rooms, information and education centers, Group Headquarters, and day rooms. The interest of the men was very high, with statistics showing that 25 per cent of the total men in the group had enrolled in both correspondence and off duty class room study.

In addition to subjects for a formal education, Lectures and round table discussions were organized to inform the men on current affairs. The Philippine Training Program was a compulsory class with the rest of the subjects left to the discretion of unit commanders as to whether they would be voluntary or compulsory. Interest ran high in both the lectures and round table discussions.

Discussions are held over the radio, at the group Red Cross Club and CRTC student detachment officers Red Cross Club once a week. The subjects covered in these information sessions were Current Battle Lines, World Relations, History, Politics, United States Domestic and Foreign Problems and Post-War Plans. The section publishes a daily four-page paper called "The Daily Informer." The paper covers Daily war news coverage, Home news, Announcements, Editorials on current events, Sports, Comics, Stage, Radio and Screen Gossip.

At various movie theaters in the Group, information films are shown on an average of one to one and a half hours per week. Preceding the film each movie night. up to date news summaries are given over the public address system.

A field constructed radio broadcasting station is operated and maintained by this section. Program material comes from radio station WVTH, APO 713, in the form of self-contained shows. Local live talent is used as often as possible in order to give variety to the program. Live talent features include a "Jive Session " conducted by a member of one of the local units, Sports Journal " by experienced sportspeople, "Hill Billy Jamboree," a reporter on the progress of colored people in the United States and a weekly news summary in the form of a commentary by a well-informed speaker. Other features deal with spot announcements, e.g., Malaria Control, Armed Forces Institute Courses, Unit Classes, Round Table Discussion and Information on the GI Bill of Rights.

The station broadcasts five news casts well-spaced during the day. On weekdays, the station is operating ten hours each day and fourteen hours on Sunday. Programs are varied with musical shows, using jazz, swing, semi-classical, classical, Hymns, Western and Hill Billy music. Self-contained shows include popular Dance Bands, Comedians and complete 15 and 30 minute shows by well-known radio stars. Remote control broadcasting of boxing, baseball and Chapel services for hospital patients is another feature of WRTC.

The Information and Education Section is presenting to the men of the Group the best information available for the improvement of their thoughts regarding the world of to-day. The vision of the Department is to inform and present aid in attaining a formal education for their

benefit. The goal of the Section is to have the men of the Group better informed and kept occupied during leisure hours.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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