

80th AIR DEPOT GROUP

LINEAGE

80th Air Depot Group constituted, 31 Jan 1942
Activated, 13 Mar 1942
Inactivated, 9 Apr 1946
Redesignated 80th Air Depot Wing, 10 Jan 1951
Inactivated, 8 Jun 1953
Disbanded, 15 Jun 1983

STATIONS

McClellan Field, CA
Karachi, India
Ranaghat, India, 3 Oct 1945
Bengal Air Depot, Titaghar, India, 4 Apr 1946
Kelly AFB, TX
Nouasseur AB, Morocco, 13 Jul 1951

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 80th Air Depot Group was designated as a group in early 1943 with personnel from the 51st Service Group. The 51st Service Group was formed at Morrison Field, FL in April 1941. Nine months after establishing Morrison Field events changed with the attack on Pearl Harbor. Two squadrons, the 53rd and 54th, left January 4, 1942, headed for San Francisco by troop train. They arrived on Friday, Jan 9, and were quartered for two days in the Cow Palace. On Sunday, Jan 11, the members of the 51st boarded the USS Mariposa which had been rapidly converted from a luxury liner, carrying passengers between the West Coast and Hawaii, to a troop ship.

In addition to the Mariposa, the convoy consisted of a freighter, the Sea Wolf, and an escort, the USS Phoenix, a heavy cruiser. The three ship convoy set sail the following day, Jan 11, 1942. There was no indication of the destination, however those who had worked at packing squadron equipment knew the crates had been stenciled "Destination Manila, PI".

Fortunes of war being what they were in early 1942, the group was unable to get into the Philippines or an alternate destination, Java. After a brief stop at Melbourne, Australia, on to Perth to spend eight nights at an Australian army facility. The group changed ships and had the pleasure of traveling on the TSS Ketooma. The Ketooma was a small inter-island cruise ship which still had its entire peace time crew, including kitchen staff and waiters. They stopped in Colombo, Ceylon, and went on to arrive in Karachi, India on March 11, 1942.

Upon arrival in Karachi there were limited facility but Karachi did have a large dirigible hanger. There was room in the hanger as it was 900 feet long, 450 feet wide, and 220 feet high. It was situated on the Sind desert approximately 15 miles outside Karachi at the cities airport.

The early assignment was providing major overhaul and repair of aircraft and assembling fighter aircraft, primarily P-40s, for the Chinese Air Force and the American Volunteer Group headed by General Chennault.

The aircraft would be shipped overseas via ship in crates to Karachi harbor and then trucked to the airbase. As they were prepared for overseas shipment they were protected with creosote. All the black goo had to be removed which was a very messy detail.

They were then assembled in the hanger on a regular production line basis. As the planes were designed and manufactured in the States several months before arrival overseas they required modifications as they were assembled. After assembly the planes had to be tested by squadron pilots prior to their being flown for assignment in the forward areas.

The group's mission changed in mid 1942 to meet the needs of the Army Air Force as numerous fighter and bomber squadrons were assigned to the theater. This consisted of assembling and preparing for combat a wide range of aircraft: P-40s, P-43s, P-38s, P-47s, P-51s, and P-66s. The P-47 was a larger aircraft and was not crated resulting in their having to be unloaded with the wheels down and towed thru the streets of Karachi to the hangar. Combat gliders were also assembled for

Merrill's Marauders for combat in Burma. The hanger was large enough to hold a number of B-24s or B-17s for repairs or modifications.

Various machine shops, instrument and armament areas plus parts and supplies were stored in partitioned off areas. The crates that contained the aircraft and parts were used to make buildings (the flight line office) and partitions.

The hangar became the living and working quarters for the original troops until desert style tents could be obtained from the British. Until the tents arrived the troops worked, ate, and slept in the hanger. During the monsoon season the tents managed many leaks and during the dry season the dust storms coated everything with a fine dust. The wood and cord beds with light mattress made sleeping uncomfortable. The mosquito nets kept the bugs away but were a good place for the bedbugs. If it wasn't the heat it was the bugs. As time went on there were barracks built which were a great improvement. Over time conditions improved so the replacement of the original members of the 80th had a lot better facilities but the weather did not change - it was still hot most of the year.

In February 1945 the 80th ADG was moved to Panagarh the site of the Eastern Air Depot which was also the home of the 47th ADG. It was a new base with plenty of construction going on and appeared to being built for the long haul. New hangars and base operations and a large concrete flight line. We went from the new barracks at Karachi back to tents. Panagarh was as hot or hotter than Karachi with no large community nearby - Calcutta was over 100 miles.

At the end of the war there were many aircraft being prepared for use against the Japanese. As the war ended many were painted over with the Chinese insignia. As the planes that had either large repairs or a lot of flight time were returned to the air depot they were stripped of good parts and sent to the scrap pile which was a burning pit of aircraft. All types of aircraft were destroyed, bombers, fighters, gliders, and light planes were placed in a pile and set ablaze.

80th Air Depot Group

Hq and Hq Squadron--Karachi, India

80th Supply Squadron

80th Repair Squadron

80th Air Depot Group

Hq and Hq Squadron--Ondal, India

80th Depot Repair Squadron

80th Depot Supply Squadron

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources