

NO. BOMB-405-HI  
FEB-1944

[REDACTED]

FEBRUARY 1944

405 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

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**CONFIDENTIAL**SQ-BOMB-405-H1  
FEB 44405TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M), 38TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M),  
ARMY AIR FORCES,  
S-2 SECTION.**SECRET**A.P.O. 713, Unit #1,  
20 March, 1944.

Subject: Squadron History for February, 1944.

To: Commanding General, United States Army Air Forces, Washington,  
D.C. (Thru Channels).

1. The 405th Squadron has been an active unit under Fifth Bomber Command since 5 September, 1942.
2. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:
  - (a) 1 February, 1944 - Seventy-six (76) commissioned and two hundred and eighty (280) enlisted.
  - (b) Decrease of ten (10) commissioned and eight (8) enlisted.
  - (c) 29 February, 1944 - Sixty-seven (67) commissioned and two hundred and seventy-two (272) enlisted.
3. Stations (perm or temp) of units or parts thereof:
  - (a) Air Echelon to Dobodura APO 503 on 11 February, 1944 and 22 February, 1944.
  - (b) Return of Air Echelon at Dobodura APO 503 on 17 February, 1944 and 29 February, 1944. Advance detail of seven (7) ground personnel remain at Finschhafen.
4. Training:
  - (a) 1 February, 1944 - three B-25C-1's, twelve B-25D-1's, five B-25D's and one B-25H-1 of which three B-25D-1's and four B-25D's were not serviceable. 29 February, 1944 - two B-25C-1's, thirteen B-25D-1's and three B-25D's of which four B-25D-1's were not serviceable.
  - (b) Thirty-six (36) trained pilots and seventeen (17) trained crews.
  - (c) Practice bombing from medium altitudes and practice bombing and straffing from minimum altitudes is conducted on days the squadron is released for maintenance and training.
5. Squadron Commanding Officers:
  - (a) JESSE R. FOLEY, JR., Captain.
  - (b) 405th Bombardment Squadron (M), 38th Bombardment Group (M).
  - (c) Most experienced pilot in organization, having been Operations Officer from 15 June, 1943 to 18 February, 1944.
  - (d) Captain FOLEY relieved Major JOHN J. WATKINS, returned to the United States of America, per Special Order #43, 38th Bomb Group, dated 20 February, 1944.
  - (e) A.P.O. 929, Port Moresby, 20 February, 1944.

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SQUADRON HISTORY FOR FEBRUARY, 1944, 20 MARCH, 1944 - CONTINUED:-

## 6. Outstanding mission: Mission #46D-1, 15 February, 1944.

Nine B-25D-1's of the 405th Squadron took off from Strip #4, at Dobodura at 0800/L to execute a minimum altitude bombing and strafing attack against the township of Kavieng, New Ireland. The 405th flew as number two squadron of the 38th Group formation which led the 345th Group to the target by way of Cape Gloucester and Sand Island. Rendezvous with fighter cover was effected over Sand Island at 1000/L. One airplane was forced to return to base from Sand Island due to engine trouble.

The squadron approached Kavieng over Balgai Bay to the South and formed one element of six airplanes abreast and one of five abreast which included three airplanes of the 823rd Squadron. Both elements approached the target at minimum altitude on a heading of 360 degrees with one minute interval between flights. Each airplane carried 5 x 500 lb. demolition 8 to 11 second delay fuse bombs making a total of 40 bombs dropped through the Northern half of the township, China town and along the shoreline from Government Wharf to China town. 19,450 x .50 calibre and 1,900 x .30 calibre rounds of ammunition were expended by 405th airplanes in strafing the entire township and waterfront. Time of attack was 1115/L to 1117/L.

K-21 oblique photos were taken during the attack. Large quantities of black smoke, flaming explosions and flying debris indicate much damage to supplies, buildings and fuel dumps. An accurate assessment of damage is impossible due to distance from the cameras of bomb bursts and intervening smoke and foliage. Photos reveal large quantities of canvas covered supplies along the waterfront and at several points in the township, three single engine floatplanes pulled up to shore South of Government Wharf, a burning cargo ship or tanker in the harbor, a Sugar Charlie and several luggers and barges near Government Wharf, manned ack-ack positions in China town, many buildings and tents, underground shelters, trucks and staff cars, fuel drums, a pile of salvaged airplane parts, etc.

Heavy anti-aircraft fire encountered was of moderate intensity and highly inaccurate with bursts 1000 to 1500 feet above and West of our airplanes. Machine gun fire was intense and accurate from positions along the waterfront, in China town and adjacent to the airdrome. Four airplanes were holed by machine gun fire resulting in only minor damage. Airplane #306 of the 71st Squadron was seen to crash land in the water approximately three miles West of Nusa Island after being hit and set afire by ack-ack over the target. Three members of the crew were seen to get out of the plane and were later picked up by a Catalina flying boat. One man of this crew parachuted before the plane crashed, his parachute was seen to open shortly before he hit the water but he was not recovered. One airplane of the 823rd Squadron was seen to burst into flame over the target and crash there. On withdrawal, an enemy destroyer awash at the stern was seen between Eruk and Elobio Islands in Nusa Channel. Two crews report that this destroyer fired two salvos at their formation as they passed 1000 yards to the West. No enemy airplanes were seen airborne during the mission.

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SQUADRON HISTORY FOR FEBRUARY, 1944, 20 MARCH, 1944 - CONTINUED:-

## Outstanding Mission - Continued:-

Weather was good over the target, there being scattered cumulus clouds at 2,000 feet and bright sunshine. Withdrawal was to the Southwest between New Hanover and New Ireland thence to Dobodura over the same route flown en route. Our airplanes landed at 1415/L.

7. Enemy aircraft and shipping:
  - (a) Assisted in destruction of enemy gunboat at New Hanover Island on 16 February, 1944.
8. Losses in action, officers, enlisted men and aircraft:
  - (a) Mission #60L-1.
  - (b) Mission #60L-1, 1st Lieut. KIMMEL R. BEEDY and crew consisting of 1st Lieut. MICHAEL A. CONFORTO, 1st Lieut. DAVID E. BEALE, Staff Sergeant ALFRED WINTER, Sergeant RUDOLPH B. WILLIAMSON. Same Mission, 1st Lieut. NORWOOD L. JOHNSON.
  - (c) Lieut. BEEDY and crew failed to return to base on 29 February, 1944, and were last seen off Finschhafen flying toward the Admiralty Islands. Lieut. JOHNSON, navigator, was killed 29 February, 1944, when the airplane in which he was flying crashed on takeoff.
  - (d) No wounded personnel.
  - (e) Three officers, two enlisted men.
  - (f) No prisoners.
  - (g) One B-25D-1 lost on Mission #60L-1. One B-25D-1 salvaged as result of crash on takeoff for mission #60L-1.
9. No awards have been made to personnel for action during the month of February, 1944.

*Arthur C. Dwire, Jr.*  
 ARTHUR C. DWIRE, JR.,  
 Captain, Air Corps,  
 Squadron Historical Officer.

1 Incl:- Narrative Report of Activities, February, 1944.

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405TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M), 38TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M),  
ARMY AIR FORCES,  
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A.P.O. 713, Unit #1,  
20 March, 1944.

NARRATIVE REPORT OF ACTIVITIES, FEBRUARY, 1944.

From an operational standpoint, the month of February was highlighted by two junkets to Dobodura involving the air echelon. The squadron operated under the 308th Bombardment Wing from 11 February to 17 February, 1944 and again from 22 February through the end of the month. Two highly accurate unopposed medium level bombing attacks were conducted against Momote Airdrome in the Admiralties. A crippling blow was dealt the enemy base at Kavieng in a daring bombing and strafing attack at minimum altitude on 15 February. The following day the squadron conducted a search for enemy shipping in the vicinity of New Hanover Island and gained an assist in the destruction of one enemy gunboat. The air echelon returned to Port Moresby on 17 February for mechanical maintenance then again journeyed to Dobodura on 22 February to play an active part in the conquest of Los Negros Island in the Admiralties through lending close air support to ground troops. The month's operations ended rather disastrously on 29 February, when Lieut. BEEDY and crew failed to return to base after attempting to reach the Admiralties through extremely bad weather which forced the rest of the squadron to turn back before reaching the target. Lieut. JOHNSON, navigator, was killed on the morning of the 29th when Capt. HENDERSON'S airplane crashed on takeoff. Fortunately, no other members of the crew were injured although the plane had to be salvaged.

Squadron morale momentarily hit a new high when seven ground men were selected to be returned to the United States on or about the first of April. Enthusiasm was dimmed, however, when the men realized that seven from a total of one hundred and forty men with at least twenty-six months service overseas is rather a small quota. Hopes are high that our quota of ground men to be returned home will be substantially increased in the near future. Combat men are looking forward to the arrival of replacements for there are many who have nearly reached a total of fifty combat missions against the enemy.

The ground echelon was kept busy during the month making preparations for our move by air to the new base at Nadzab. After fifteen months at Durand, Port Moresby, everyone looked forward with interest to a change in environment and the establishment of a new camp.

Incl. No. 1.

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