

**492nd
BOMBARDMENT
SQUADRON**

FOREWORD


Those of us who have had the privilege to serve as crew members on bomber aircraft will never forget that tremendous feeling you experience taking one of those huge planes into the air, nor the great rush of accomplishment once the mission is complete! The comradeship and closeness you develop, first with your crew and second within the squadron, is something that a single-seat pilot will never feel. This monograph has been developed to preserve the dynamic history of the 492nd Bomb Squadron and all the people who made it possible. Technical Sergeant Gregory S. Byard, our Wing Historian, spent a great many hours over the past six months researching, drafting, compiling and assembling this product into its final form. It was a personal labor of love for him as well as an attempt to bring to light some of the significant events and accomplishments made by the 492nd and its people since activation as the 80th Aero Squadron in 1917. I hope that everyone who reads this work will share the love, time, and effort expended in bringing it into print. It is dedicated to everyone who is now, or ever has been associated with this proud unit! I salute you all.



GEORGE P. COLE, JR., Colonel, USAF
Commander, 7th Bombardment Wing

INTRODUCTION

Since arriving at Carswell AFB in July 1985 I have developed a fascination for the B-36 operations conducted by the 7th Bombardment Wing from 1948 to 1958. That fascination has been cultivated by members of the 7th Bomb Wing B-36 Association. Men like Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Frank Kleinwechter, Colonel (Ret) Richard George, and Chief Master Sergeant (Ret) Gail Adams. It was your hardwork, dedication and committment to peace that has allowed me to write this monograph. Pioneering the development of the B-36 was a monumental feat in the history of airpower which should not go unnoticed. For this reason this monograph along with the 9th and 436th Bomb Squadrons, have been written. It is but a small tribute to the sacrifices made by B-36 members. I am extremely proud and fortunate to have associated with this fine group of individuals. Thanks to your efforts the world is a safer place for all of us to live!



GREGORY S. BYARD, TSgt, USAF
Historian, 7th Bombardment Wing

HISTORY OF 492d BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

The 492d Bombardment Squadron had its origin in the 80th Aero Squadron which was organized at Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas, on 15 August 1917. Early the next month the service nature of the unit became clearly apparent when it was redesignated the 80th Aero Squadron (Construction). Near the end of October the unit left San Antonio on the first lap of its journey overseas, and arrived at Garden City, New York, on 3 November. The Carpathia, on which it sailed for Europe some three weeks later, docked at Le Havre, France, on 14 December 1917.

Three days after arriving in France the 80th Squadron took station at the 2d Aviation Instruction Center in Tours. There it performed construction work until the end of World War I. Meanwhile, on 1 February 1918, it had been redesignated the 492d Aero Squadron (Construction). The unit returned to the United States aboard the Frederick late in January 1919 and was disbanded at Garden City on 13 February.

In order to perpetuate the history and traditions of the 492d Aero Squadron the unit was reconstituted on 5 December 1936 and consolidated with the 492d Bombardment Squadron, which had been constituted and allotted to the Organized Reserve on 31 March 1924. The consolidation of the two units under the bombardment designation thus served to extend the history of the reserve squadron back to 15 August 1917. The 492d Bombardment Squadron was stationed at Seattle, Washington, from the time it was constituted in 1924 until it was disbanded on 31 May 1942.

On 19 September 1942, less than four months after the 492d Bombardment Squadron was disbanded, the 492d Bombardment Squadron (H) was constituted. Having been assigned to the 7th Bombardment Group (H), it was activated at New Delhi, India, on 25 October 1942. There was no relation between this 492d Bombardment Squadron (H) and the earlier 492d Bombardment Squadron until 31 March 1960, when the Department of the Air Force, acting on the recommendation of the USAF Historical Division, consolidated the histories of the two units.

When the "new" 492d Bombardment Squadron was activated in October 1942 it took station at Karachi Air Base, India, and immediately began preparations to enter combat with its parent group in the India-Burma Theater of Operations. The initial cadre consisted of one officer, First Lieutenant Herbert C. Boettcher, who assumed command of the unit, and ten enlisted men. Personnel strength grew slowly at first. Yet by 1 February 1943, with 48 officers and 388 enlisted men, the squadron was considered a complete fighting unit. By that time it was equipped with eight B-24 Liberator aircraft, a number which ultimately grew to fourteen.

The squadron actually entered combat on 24 January 1943 when, operating from its base at Gaya, India, it bombed docks, shipping, and warehouses at Rangoon, Burma. That raid was followed early in February with an attack upon a railroad bridge at Myitnge. During the next five months the squadron participated in repeated attacks on enemy communications lines in central and southern Burma, particularly in the area around Rangoon. Major targets in that respect included bridges, docks, and railroad yards at Rangoon; railroad bridges at Myintge, Pyinmana, and Sinthe; docks at Moulmein; and shipping in the Gulf of Martaban. The squadron's Liberators struck also at the Mingaladon Airport, a Japanese

fighter base near Rangoon; the Mantu lead mines; and the Thilawa oil refinery.

The monsoon season, commencing in May 1943, slowed down combat operations. Only eight missions were flown in that month, for instance only four were completed in June. Squadron officers took advantage of this slack period to initiate a number of special training courses. They included armament, the geography of Burma, naval craft identification, navigation, radio code practice, and weather. In July 1943, however, the unit attacked enemy shipping in the far distant Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. During August it persistently harassed shipping lanes in the Gulf of Martaban from Rangoon down to the Andaman Islands. A significant mission for September was an attack upon the Syriam oil refineries on the river opposite Rangoon.

During the last three months of the year, following the breakup of the monsoon, the squadron increased the tempo of its combat activities. In October communications lines in the Rangoon area and shipping lanes in the Andaman Sea felt the brunt of its bombers. The highlight of the unit's raids during November 1943 was an attack upon the Insein yards at Rangoon, reportedly the only place in Burma with facilities for repairing locomotives. In December there were two 2,300 mile round-trip flights to Bangkok, Thailand, the first for an attack upon the government docks there, and the second to bomb the Terminus Railroad Station.

On 22 January 1944 the 492d Squadron took station at Madhaiganj Army Air Base, India. It began the second year of combat activities with continued efforts to destroy enemy-held communications into and within Burma by bombing bridges, docks and warehouses, locomotives and rolling stock, and railway marshalling yards on land, and cargo vessels and naval craft on the adjacent waters. Such attacks were interspersed at times, particularly in the late spring of 1944, with raids on airdromes, barracks areas, depots, gasoline plants, landing strips, supply dumps, and troop concentrations.

In mid-June 1944, after the beginning of the monsoon period, the squadron moved to Tezganon-Kurmitola, India, and for the time being ceased combat operations. Instead it began transporting gasoline across the "Hump" to the Fourteenth Air Force in China. The first cargo was flown to Kunming on 20 June. These operations continued until after the first of October. During the period involved the unit had transported approximately 500,000 gallons of gasoline to China. Effective 5 October the squadron moved back to Madhaiganj and began a "refresher" training course which included gunnery practice, formation flying, and dry-run bombing. Near the end of the month, much to the satisfaction of all personnel, the unit resumed regular combat activities.

Highlights of bombing operations for the remainder of the year were raids on the Ban Dara and the Geang Luang bridges on the Bangkok-Chiangmai railroad, an attack on the Pyinmana railroad yards, and a series of strikes along a 60-mile stretch of the Bangkok-Thanbyuzayt railway yards. For the greater part of December 1944, however, the squadron switched from blasting enemy lines of communications to destroying enemy stores. In December also a small component of the 492d Squadron left on six weeks of detached service in China. Based at Luliang, it engaged in hauling gasoline and other supplies to Sui-chuan and Liang-shan.

Early in 1945 the 492d Bombardment Squadron supported British ground forces in the region north of Mandalay and east of the Irrawaddy River. After a resumption of attacks upon communications lines, it participated in a 2,500 mile mission in which it blasted railway roundhouses, rail sidings, and warehouses at Jumporn, a port on the Malay Peninsula south of Bangkok. In March the squadron went all out against enemy communications in southern Burma, Thailand, and the Tenasserim Peninsula. That involved two raids on the Ban Tak Kam Bridge at Bandon, Thailand. In each instance the Liberators were in the air for over 17 hours, thought to be a record at the time for heavy bombers. Other highlights of the unit's combat activities during the closing weeks of the Burma campaign included a night raid up and down an 82-mile section of the Bangkok-Thanbyuzayt railroad, during which it destroyed two locomotives and numerous railroad cars. Later in the month the 492d participated in a massive effort with other units of the 7th Bombardment Group to destroy the Burma-Thailand railroad. Using the unit's Liberators as "dive-glide" bombers on that occasion, the aircrews destroyed nine bridges.

After the fall of Rangoon on 7 May 1945 the 492d Bombardment Squadron moved to Tezpur, India, and once again took on the mission of airlifting gasoline over the Hump into China. Some six weeks were required to refit the heavy bombers as substitute cargo carriers. The first mission was flown on 20 June. Normal operations continued throughout the summer. On 9 September the squadron was notified that its airlifting mission would be considered as accomplished when it had transported a specified amount of gasoline to China. Speeding up operations, the aircrews completed the allotted task by 18 September. Six weeks later the squadron moved to Dudhkundi, India, and thence to Kanchrapara on 19 November. It sailed from Calcutta aboard the General Black on 7 December 1945, and arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on 5 January 1946. The unit was inactivated at Camp Kilmer the following day.

Effective 1 October 1946 the 492d was redesignated a very heavy bombardment unit; activated at Fort Worth Army Air Field, Texas; and assigned to the 7th Bombardment Group, Fifteenth Air Force, Strategic Air Command. It was not until the last week in October, however, that the squadron received its first contingent of troops, 59 officers and 328 enlisted men on assignment from the 327th Bombardment Squadron. Lieutenant Colonel James H. Thompson assumed command of the newly activated 492d. It then began a training program which was designed primarily for overseas operations. The squadron was equipped with the B-29 aircraft until late in the summer of 1948.

In April 1947 the 492d Squadron engaged in three long-range missions. The first was as part of a mass formation flight from its home base to Los Angeles. Next it participated in a simulated bombing attack on Kansas City. Lastly, the squadron helped to provide an escort for President Miguel Aleman of Mexico in a flight from New Orleans to Washington, D.C., in May 1947.

The squadron spent a part of June and July 1947 on maneuvers in Japan. During August most of its B-29's joined others of its companion units (9th and 436th Bombardment Squadrons) on a nonstop flight to Anchorage, Alaska, for the purpose of testing the immediate mobility of the 7th Bombardment Group. Before returning to Fort Worth they engaged in flights that provided training in local approach procedures and in navigation. The following month the three squadrons deployed to Giebelstadt, Germany. While in Europe they flew several training missions in the central and southern parts of the continent.

The squadron received its first B-36 aircraft in June 1948. A few weeks thereafter it was redesignated a heavy bombardment unit. By January 1949 the squadron had completed the transition to the new bomber and had closed out its B-29 program. In March 1949 an aircrew assigned to the unit flew nonstop a distance of 9,600 miles (from Fort Worth to Minneapolis, Great Falls, Key West, Denver, Great Falls, Spokane, Denver, and back to Fort Worth) in 44 hours. As reported, this was the longest recorded flight to that date in a B-36 bomber.

The 492d Bombardment Squadron remained assigned to the 7th Bombardment Group until the group was inactivated in June 1952. For several years thereafter it was assigned directly to the 7th Bombardment Wing. During that time it continued to operate from its Fort Worth station, known after 29 January 1948 as Carswell Air Force Base. Generally speaking, its primary mission all the while was to maintain a high degree of strategic striking power, whether operating on the squadron, group, wing, division, air force, or command level. Most of its operational activities were conducted at its home base and on various types of cross-country flights and special missions within the forty-eight states. Over the whole period, however, there were numerous deployments, maneuvers, and temporary duty missions outside the United States.

In August 1949, for instance, the 492d Squadron inaugurated for the 7th Bombardment Group a series of routine training missions to Alaska. During February 1950 the squadron participated with other bombardment units of the group in an operational readiness test which also involved flights to Alaska. For that purpose they deployed several aircraft to Eielson Air Force Base, Fairbanks. It served as a forward staging area from which simulated missions were directed against designated targets in the United States. In May 1950 the 492d Squadron provided one of two B-36's on a mobility mission to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico.

On 17 July 1951 six aircraft and aircrews assigned to the squadron departed Fort Worth for Goose Air Base, Labrador, Canada. Thence they were dispatched on a navigation mission to Thule Air Base, Greenland. On the return flight from Goose Bay to Carswell, they made simulated attacks on Tampa, Florida; Birmingham, Alabama; and Fort Worth. Another deployment to Goose Bay on a unit simulated combat mission followed in March 1954. Meanwhile in December 1951 the squadron provided one of two heavy bombers of the 7th Bombardment Wing on a special mission to Sculthorpe, England. The purpose of this deployment was to participate in a Royal Air Force navigation mission on a noncompetitive basis, to effect a mutual exchange of ideas with Royal Air Force personnel, and to compare techniques in target study and briefing.

In August 1954 the 492d Squadron participated in a 7th Bombardment Wing maneuver to North Africa on a simulated strike mission, flying non-stop the 4,600 miles to Nouasseur Air Base, French Morocco, which had been designated the post-strike headquarters. On the return flight to Carswell Air Force Base the bombers made simulated attacks upon targets in the state of Mississippi. Eleven months later the entire 7th Wing deployed to North Africa for 60 days on a unit simulated combat mission. While there the 492d Squadron, along with its companion tactical units, flew several missions to test the facilities of Nouasseur Air Base both as prestrike and post-strike staging area for a B-36 task force. In February 1956 the squadron deployed about one-half of its aircraft and aircrews to North Africa as a part of a 19th Air Division Task Force operation. It involved a flight to Nouasseur Air Base by

way of Loring Air Force Base, Limestone, Maine; a strike mission from Nouasseur to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; a strike mission from Nouasseur and return; and redeployment to Fort Worth. A second mission overseas in connection with a 19th Air Division operations occurred in October-November 1956. On that occasion, in addition to the flights over and back to the home base in the United States, there were strike missions from Nouasseur and return, and from Nouasseur to Burtonwood Air Depot, England.

In December 1957 the entire 7th Bombardment wing began preparations for converting from the B-36 aircraft to the B-52 Stratofortress. Early in February, the wing officially became a B-52 organization, with the adoption of pertinent manning documents and equipment authorization. In March 1958 the commanding officer of the 492d Bombardment Squadron, along with other officers in the wing, went to Castle Air Force Base, California, for transition training in the Stratofortress. The first of the B-52's arrived at Carswell in June, at which time the wing became in reality a jet bombardment organization. In January 1959 it attained a combat ready status in the B-52.

Effective 15 June 1959, less than six months after having completed the transition from the B-36 to the B-52 aircraft, the 492d Bombardment Squadron was reassigned to the 4228th Strategic Wing, and took station at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi. It immediately began routine training activities as a component of the 4228th Wing. Special operations and missions soon followed.

APPENDIX I

LINEAGE

Organized: 80th Aero Squadron at Kelly Field, Texas
 Effective 15 August 1917
 SO 83, Hq., Kelly Field, Texas

Redesignated: 80th Aero Squadron (Construction)
 Effective 5 September 1917
 SO 104, Hq., Kelly Field, Texas

Redesignated: 492d Aero Squadron (Construction)
 Effective 1 February 1918

Disbanded: Garden City, New York
 13 February 1919

Reconstituted: 5 December 1936
 WD Ltr. AG 320.2, 23 November 1936

Consolidated: 492d Aero Squadron (Construction) with 492d Bombardment
 Squadron
 Effective 5 December 1936
 (Consolidated unit retained designation 492d Bombardment
 Squadron)
 WD Ltr. AG 320.2, 23 November 1936

Constituted: 492d Bombardment Squadron
 31 March 1924

Allotted to the Organized Reserves: 31 March 1924

Consolidated: 492d Bombardment Squadron with the 492d Bombardment
 Squadron (Construction)
 5 December 1936
 (Consolidated unit retained designation 492d Bombardment
 Squadron)
 WD Ltr. AG 320.2, 23 November 1936

Disbanded: 31 May 1942
 WD Ltr. AG 320.2 Org Res, 20 October 1942

Consolidated: 492d Bombardment Squadron (organized as the 80th Aero
 Squadron, 15 August 1917 and disbanded on 31 May 1942,
 with the 492d Bombardment Squadron (H), constituted
 on 19 September 1942)
 DAF Ltr. AFOMO 379m, 31 March 1960

Constituted: 492d Bombardment Squadron (H)
 WD Ltr. AG 320.2, 18 September 1942

Activated: New Delhi, India
Effective 25 October 1942
GO 30, Hq., Tenth Air Force, 20 October 1942

Inactivated: Camp Kilmer, New Jersey
6 January 1946
GO 14, Hq., Army Service Forces (New York Port of
Embarkation, 6 January 1946, pursuant to WD Ltr.
AG 322, 18 September 1945).

Redesignated: 492d Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy
1 October 1946
WD Ltr. AG 322, 27 September 1946

Activated: Fort Worth Army Air Field, Texas
Effective 1 October 1946
GO 75, Hq., Fifteenth Air Force, 22 October 1946

Redesignated: 492d Bombardment Squadron, Heavy
DAF Ltr. 322 AFOOR 796e, 20 July 1948

APPENDIX II

ASSIGNMENTS

Unknown	15 August 1917 - 1 February 1918
Headquarters, Air Service, Service of Supply (Detachment attached to Second Aviation Instruction Center)	1 February 1918 - 9 December 1918 15 April 1918 - 9 December 1918
Unknown	9 December 1918 - 13 February 1919
7th Bombardment Group (H)	25 October 1942 - 6 January 1946
7th Bombardment Group, Very Heavy	1 October 1946 - 16 June 1952
7th Bombardment Wing, Heavy	16 June 1952 - 15 June 1959
4228th Strategic Wing (H, Jet)	15 June 1959 -

APPENDIX III

AWARDS

Distinguished Unit Citation: Thailand, 19 March 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award: 6 October 1959 - 15 July 1960

Service Streamers: Theater of Operations (WWI)

Campaigns: India-Burma (WWII)
China Defensive (WWII)
Central Burma (WWII)
China Offensive (WWII)

APPENDIX IV

STATION LIST

Kelly Field, Texas	15 August 1917 - 28 October 1917
Garden City, New York	3 November 1917 - 22 November 1917
Tours, France	17 December 1917 - 29 November 1918
Brest, France	1 December 1918 - 19 January 1919
Garden City, New York	31 January 1919 - 13 February 1919
Seattle, Washington	* * * * 31 March 1924 - 31 May 1942
Karachi Air Base, India	* * * * 25 October 1942 - 30 October 1942
New Malir, India	30 October 1942 - 25 November 1942
Gaya, India	25 November 1942 - 26 February 1943
Bishinupur, India	26 February 1943 - 25 April 1943
Panagarah, India	25 April 1943 - 22 January 1944
Madhaiganj, India	22 January 1944 - 17 June 1944
Texgaon-Kurmitola, India	17 June 1944 - 2 October 1944
Madhaiganj, India	2 October 1944 - 4 June 1945
Tezpur, Inida	4 June 1945 - 31 October 1945
Dudhkundi, India	31 October 1945 - 19 November 1945
Kancharapara, India	19 November 1945 - 25 November 1945
Camp Angus, India	25 November 1945 - 7 December 1945
Fort Worth Army Air Field, Texas (Later Carswell AFB)	* * * * 1 October 1946 - 15 June 1959
Columbus AFB, Mississippi	15 June 1959 -

APPENDIX V

COMMANDING OFFICERS

1st Lt Herbert C. Boettcher	25 Oct 42 - 13 Jan 43
Capt Joe Pirruccello	13 Jan 43 - 9 Apr 43
Capt William A. Delahay	9 Apr 43 - 28 Dec 43
Capt John E. Stephens	28 Dec 43 - 8 Apr 44
Capt Hilliard L. Gandy	8 Apr 44 - 15 Apr 45
Maj Ralph A. Jensen	15 Apr 45 - 15 Jun 45
Capt Phillip A. Watson	15 Jun 45 - 15 Aug 45
Capt Brad M. Chase	15 Aug 45 - Unknown
* * * *	
Lt Col James H. Thompson	25 Oct 46 - 27 Nov 46
Lt Col Howard T. Hugos	27 Nov 46 - 31 Oct 47
Lt Col Richard T. Hernland	17 Nov 47 - Unknown
Lt Col Francis J. Schuck	31 Aug 48 - 15 Jan 50
Lt Col Walter E. Chambers	15 Jan 50 - 27 Oct 50
Maj Finaly Ross, Jr.	27 Oct 50 - 11 Aug 51
Maj Arthur L. Barnes	11 Aug 51 - 15 Dec 51
Maj Delbert L. Huffman	15 Dec 51 - 21 Mar 52
Lt Col Lester Personeus, Jr.	21 Mar 52 - 15 Jan 53
Lt Col William M. Crampton	15 Jan 53 - 10 May 56
Lt Col William M. Jones	10 May 56 -

