

CHAPTER 7

30th Bombardment Squadron

Part of the 19th BG, the 30th BS experienced the early setbacks of the Philippines campaign before moving its surviving B-17s to Java in early 1942. Meanwhile, much of the ground echelon remained on Luzon and fought as infantry to defend the Bataan Peninsula, costing many lives.

On 5 March 1942 the 30th BS's air echelon left Java for Batchelor in Australia's Northern Territory. From here supply and evacuation flights were conducted to the Philippines. Meanwhile those B-17Es which required much-needed maintenance were sent down to RAAF Laverton, Melbourne, where RAAF engineers assisted repairs.

After a three-week stay at Batchelor the 30th BS then moved to Cloncurry in Queensland. Its first combat loss in New Guinea took place on 25 April 1942 when B-17E 41-2505 disappeared after departing Port Moresby in the early morning for a bombing mission against Rabaul. It crashed into Mt Obree at 0446 and was not located until post-war. On 13 May 1942 the squadron moved to Longreach where it remained for two months before moving further north to Mareeba.

Following the late 1942 decision to withdraw the 19th BG from the theatre, in November the remaining 30th BS inventory of B-17Es was transferred to the 43rd BG, after which the squadron's long-serving personnel returned to the US. Major Thomas Steed as squadron commander oversaw the early operations including the evacuation from the Philippines and Java. He was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Jack Wood on 21 August 1942 who saw out the remainder of the squadron's time in Australia and New Guinea. The 30th BS lost fourteen Fortresses to combat and accidents in the SWPA theatre.

The 30th BS logo was a walking cartoon policeman carrying a truncheon, as shown at the top of page 44. This design was never officially approved, however, and was replaced in 1954 with a different design.



B-17E 41-2434 seen in HAD camouflage during a 1942 visit to Ohakea airfield, New Zealand. This was one of the original 14th RS bombers that arrived in Australia in February 1942 (see Chapter 3). It was subsequently transferred to the 30th BS but crashed during a test flight from Townsville on 16 August 1942.