

CHINESE-AMERICAN COMPOSITE WING

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BASED somewhere among the sugar-loaf hills of China is the Chinese-American Composite Wing of the 14th Air Force. There U. S.-built planes bear the twelve-pointed star insignia of China, carry bombs and gasoline from America and are flown by airmen named Wang, Tsao, Lo, Chin, Jones and Smith. This composite wing is a dream come true for Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault who sponsored the program to train Chinese air cadets in the United States where they learn our methods of aerial warfare.

Not only has China's new air force been successful in harassing the Jap communication lines to Burma and the Malay peninsula, but it also has met and bested the enemy in aerial battles. It has given effective aid to China's own ground troops by turning back the Japanese thrust westward in the Tungting Lake area last December. With B-25s and P-40s the Chinese-American squadrons bombed and strafed the area so heavily that 35,000 Jap troops were reported killed and Chinese ground troops were able to rally and retake thousands of square miles of territory, effectively turning back one of the most serious Jap threats to central China.

In this series of bombings, one co-pilot was dropping explosives on his home village where all his relatives lived, yet he had insisted on flying the mission. "If

these bombs I drop kill my own family, but also kill some Japanese, my family and the rest of us will be better off," he had explained to the briefing officer. The Chinese have suffered much in their seven and a half years of war with the Japs and they realize that many more sacrifices must yet be made.

Before flying combat missions from China, the newly-trained cadets spent several weeks at the largest OTU in the Southeast Asia Comand where they were joined by veteran Chinese Air Force officers and by ground crews who had completed the excellent mechanics school course of the CAF in the Chunking area.

Although the squadrons originally were activated as provisional units of the AAF, a parallel command was established with Chinese officers. In this manner, the higher ranking Chinese Air Force personnel, who had not received flight training in the United States, were able to combine their operations with AAF tactics of seeking out and destroying the enemy. The duplicate staff organization was cumbersome at first, but it justified itself as each new unit gained experience and became independent of American supervision.

At OTU Chinese pilots from the States join American pilots and fly simulated tactical missions with mixed crews. Enlisted men of the Chinese Air Force take

over gunners' posts while others learn to maintain and repair the new planes alongside American ground crews. Fighter pilots and bomber crews practice formation and cross-country flying, tow-target gunnery, strafing and skip-bombing. After several weeks of intensive training with experienced American personnel, the Chinese crews go out alone, thereby gaining the experience and confidence in their own flying and in their new equipment that is the prerequisite to successful tactical flying.

When able to operate independently, the crews fly their planes to China as new units or as replacements for the composite wing. The AAF personnel move up to the front and begin actual operations jointly with the Chinese combat crews and staff personnel. Such continuous cooperation is essential to coordinate the tactics of Chinese units with those of the AAF units flying missions with General Chennault.

On November 4, 1943, units of the new Chinese Air Force flew their first mission against the Japanese. With planes of another AAF unit, the Chinese-manned Mitchells flew a sweep far out over the China Sea. Three weeks later, six B-25 crews joined the AAF in the devastating raid against the important Shinchiku air-drome on Formosa Island. Thus, after years of defensive warfare, China was able to join the offensive action of the United

Chinese pilots have learned their lessons well and now are carrying the war to the Japs in coordinated offensive strikes with the men of the AAF. In B-25s and P-40s they are bombing and strafing ground troops, supply installations and shipping in the China Sea.





American commanding officer of the composite wing is Col. I. L. Branch who shares duties with Maj. H. Y. Lee. Major Lee, a graduate of the third class of the Chinese Air Force, 1932, holds a distinguished record of combat service.

lage, they were received with feasting and fireworks. Word spread rapidly that a crew of Chinese and American airmen had been flying together and wanted to return to their base hundreds of miles away. When the chairman of the province heard of this desire he left his local duties to provide a personal escort, and at every village on the long trip back to base there were celebrations, parades, public speeches and feasts. Gifts were showered on the men and they were questioned incessantly by pleased Chinese who wanted to know why they were flying together. The natives, of course, had often heard of American assistance, but the sight of these airmen walking together from a plane crash was indisputable evidence that Americans were actually flying with the Chinese.

This bail-out gave the three Chinese airmen an opportunity to tell the story of Chinese-American cooperation to hundreds of thousands of natives—how the men had been trained in the United States, how they had met and flown together in India and how they had been flying over these same villages almost every day in their bombing missions against the Japs. The new hope generated from this mishap did almost as much for the Chinese people as a military victory over the Japanese. ☆

States against the common enemy. November 4 truly marks an important milestone in the history of Chinese air power.

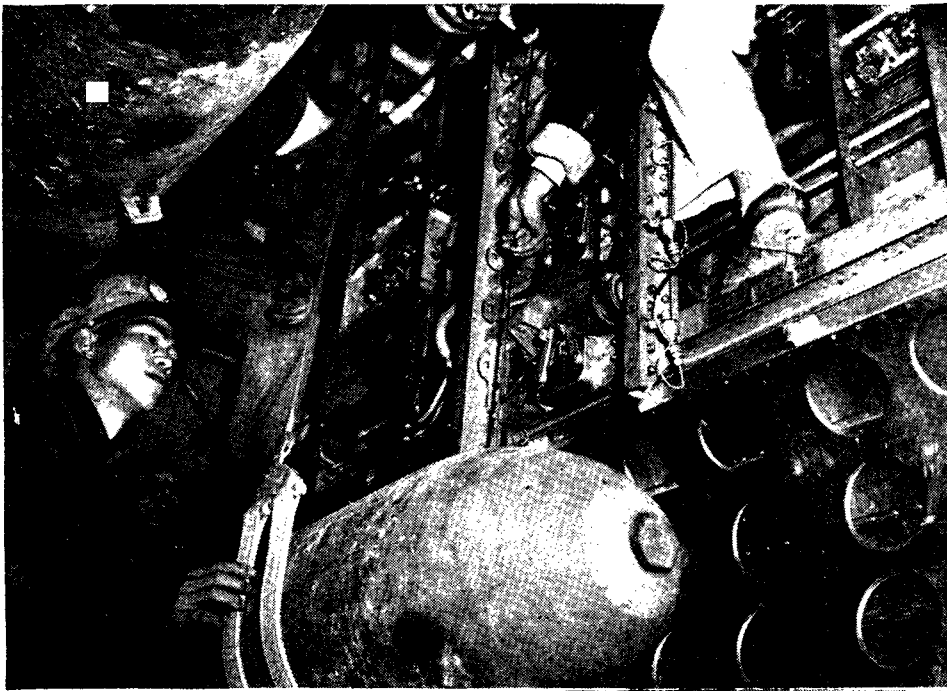
First blood was drawn on December 6 when a Chinese gunner on a B-25 shot down a Tojo during an air battle near Tungting Lake. On the day before Christmas, Chinese pilots won a fierce aerial battle over Canton, three of the flyers shooting down a Jap apiece. In the first two months of combat operations the bombers flew sixty missions. The fighters flew 200 sorties against the enemy in the first thirty days. Yet some of the Chinese pleaded for more flying and were disconsolate when they were not included on the roster of crews assigned for the next day's mission. The Chinese are eager to fight the Japs, sometimes too eager, and it has been a major problem for the American commanders to cope with them. Chinese have proved time and again that they can fly near-perfect formations, but they sometimes like to go out on their own. This inclination, to be sure, is common to all new pilots, and it is up to the more experienced American crews to restrain the eagerness of the new men.

During the comparatively short history of the Chinese-American Composite Wing's operations, probably the most important non-combat accomplishment in gaining prestige with the Chinese people came from a forced bail-out of a squadron commanding officer, and his crew.

The two Americans and three Chinese landed fifty miles from the Jap lines, and when they made their way back to a vil-

When the job involves gun repair, calibration or adjustments American mechanics can frequently take lessons from the Chinese. Metal work is second nature to these men who seem able to feel tensile strength with their sensitive hands.

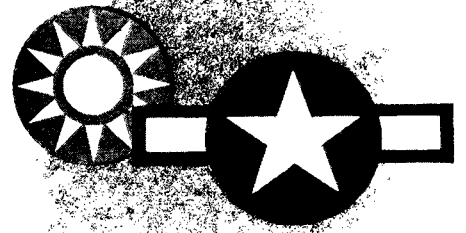




By assigning aircraft to Chinese crew chiefs, with American mechanics as supervisor-instructors, the wing's units have been able to keep their planes in commission at the time they conduct their programs of on-the-job training. These 500-pounders are marked for the Jap.



B-25s of the Chinese-American Composite Wing have piled up an impressive record against enemy shipping in the China seas. In protective revetments, beneath the colorful sugar-loaf hills, these bombers wait between missions.



Off-duty hours presented another theoretical problem in original plans for a Chinese-American tactical unit. This problem, however, remained theoretical. Chinese officers live in barracks with American officers, enjoy the same recreational program and are bound by the same disciplinary regulations. As the men overcome the language hurdle they begin to know each other as personal friends and comrades in arms.

