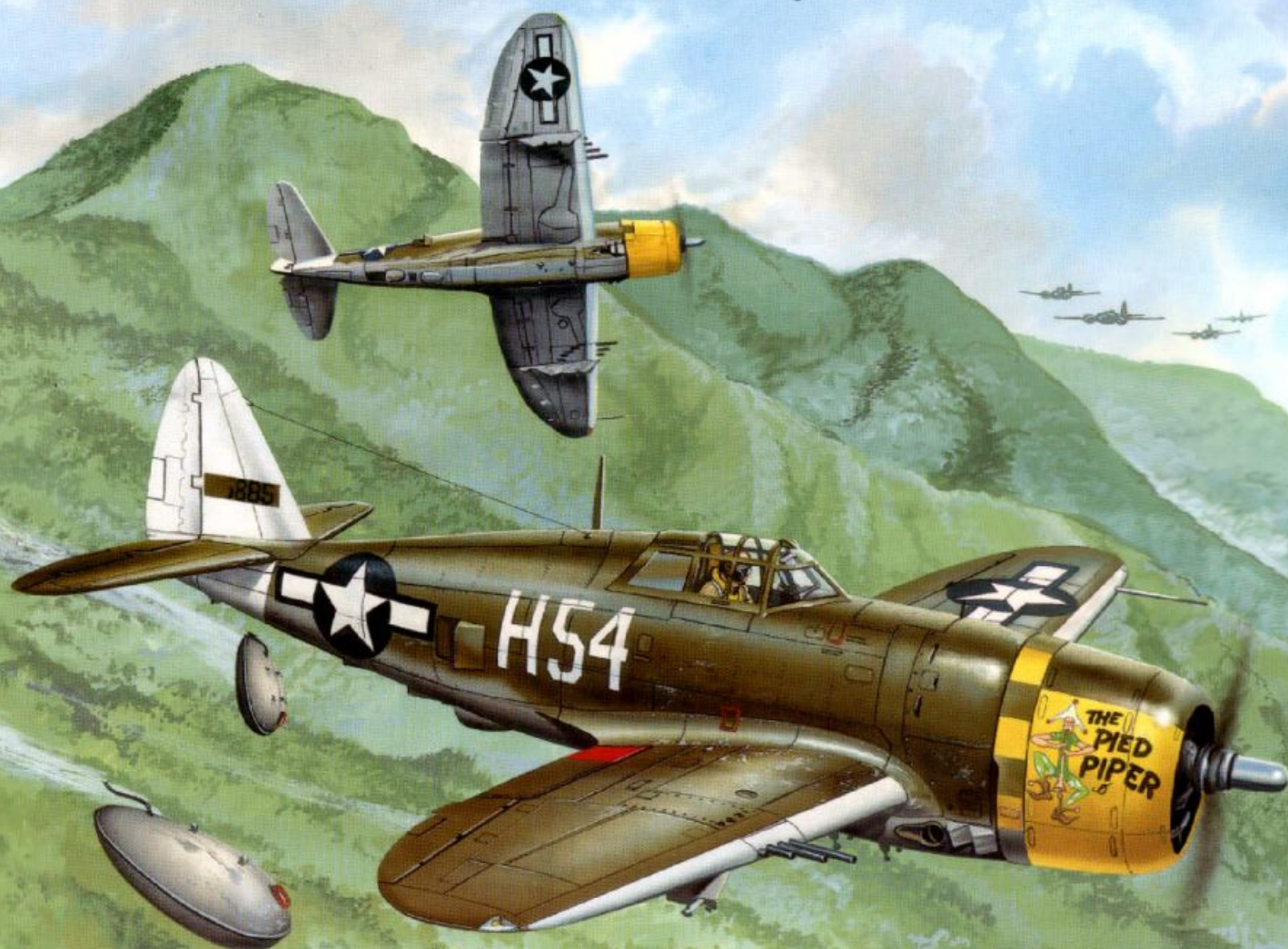


Thunderbolt

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in the Pacific Theater

by Ernest R. McDowell



squadron/signal publications Don Greer

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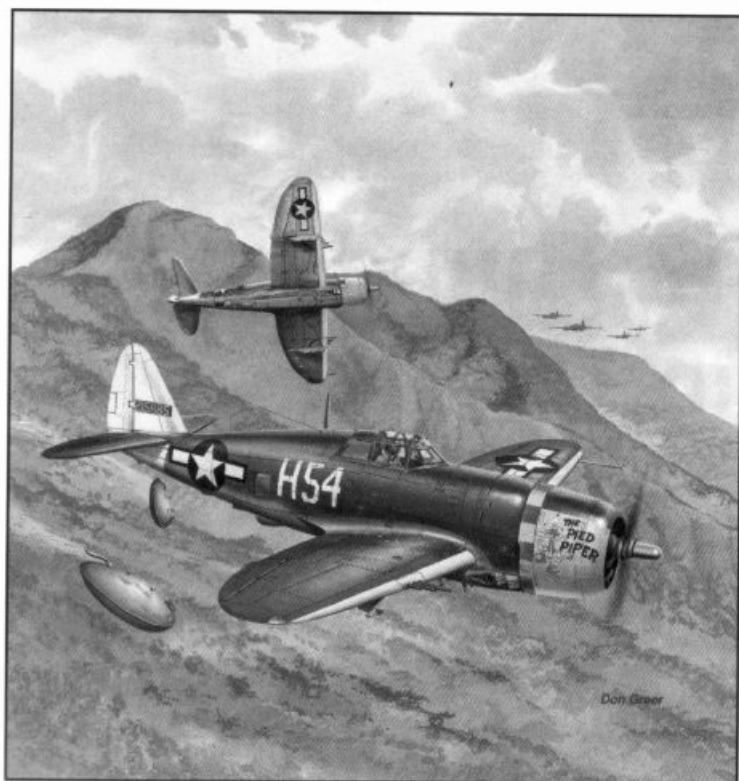
The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt in the Pacific Theater

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Color by Don Greer



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(Cover) THE PIED PIPER and his wingman jettison their drop tanks and turn to intercept a formation of Japanese bombers in the Southwest Pacific Area of Operations (SWPA) in early 1944. Both P-47Ds were assigned to the 318th Fighter Group.

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(Title Page) Brand new Republic P-47Ns during the spring of 1945. The P-47N was originally slated for use in Europe, but the war ended before any units were equipped. P-47Ns were then shipped to the Pacific where their long range would be helpful in providing fighter escort to B-29 Superfortresses pounding Japan. (Weckerle)

INTRODUCTION

The Seversky Aircraft Corporation was in trouble during the late 1930s. Despite a series of innovative and advanced designs during the middle part of the decade, by 1933 the company's fortunes were waning. US Government difficulties with Alexander de Seversky — the company founder — a degree of mismanagement, and competition from other aircraft manufacturers all combined to force the company into a downward spiral. In April of 1938 the Seversky Aircraft Corporation's board of directors forced Seversky out of the day-to-day operation of the company and elected W. Wallace Kellet company president while Alexander Kartveli was elected vice president. The company's fortunes almost immediately began to turn around and, by September of 1939, the company was renamed Republic Aircraft Corporation. The seeds that would grow into the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt had already been planted.

The P-47 Thunderbolt can trace its lineage back to the Seversky SEV-1XP of 1936. The US Army Air Corps ordered 77 of these aircraft and designated them the P-35. The Seversky P-35 was of all metal construction, armed with a .30 caliber and .50 caliber machine gun in the nose, and powered by a 14 cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-1830 Twin Wasp engine producing approximately 850 hp. Foreign orders for an improved export variant resulted in the P-35A with an uprated P&W R-1830 engine producing about 1050 hp and armed with four machine guns — two .30 caliber and two .50 caliber weapons. The P-35A was operated by both the US Army Air Corps and the Swedish Air Force.

Power, then as now, is often the heart of a successful fighter design. The rotund fuselage, elliptical wings, and radial engine of the P-35 found their way into the improved Seversky XP-41. The XP-41 greatly resembled its predecessor, but had inward retracting landing gear — which improved the aerodynamics — and a new P&W R-1830 Twin Wasp engine mated to a two-stage, two speed supercharger. The supercharged engine produced 1200 hp which provided a top speed of 320 mph at 15,000 feet. The XP-41 was armed with single .30 and .50 caliber machine guns.

The XP-41 was not placed into production since it still did not meet the performance figures of aircraft being produced in Europe. Further airframe refinements resulted in the Republic YP-43 Lancer. The YP-43 shared the same engine and supercharger with the XP-41, but offered some aerodynamic improvements which produced a top speed of 350 mph. Nevertheless, the P-43 was an interim design since Republic was already developing the P-44. The P-44 differed little from the YP-43 except for a higher powered P&W R-2180 radial engine producing 1400 hp. A further development, the P-44-2 was to have mounted a Pratt & Whitney's new 18 cylinder R-2800 radial engine which produced 2000

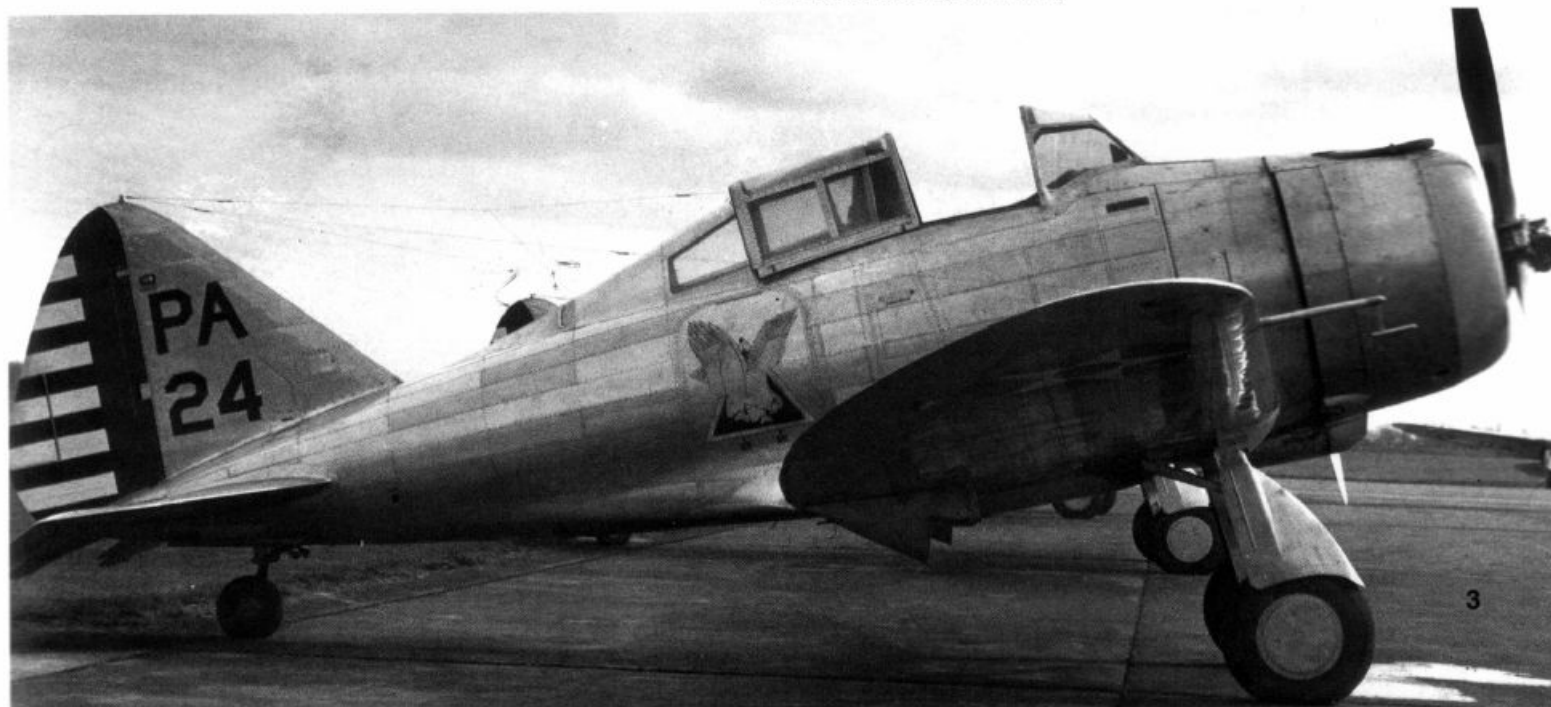
hp and would have brought the P-44 series over the 400 mph mark. Despite the improved performance, however, reports from the European battle fronts indicated the P-44 was still outclassed by the latest European designs. P-44 airframes were completed as P-43 Lancers and operated by the US Army Air Force, the Royal Australian Air Force, and the Chinese Air Force during WW II.

The XP-47 was originally designed as a lightweight fighter using a 12 cylinder Allison V-1710 inline engine and armed with two .50 caliber machine guns. The proposal never went beyond the paper stage and was quickly replaced with a larger and heavier version with four additional .30 caliber machine guns in the wings. This proposal, overtaken by events in Europe, was also canceled. Alexander Kartveli, armed with a clean sheet of paper and a memory of the P-43, designed a new fighter which shared many of the design characteristics of the earlier P-43 and yet was larger, heavier, and far more powerful. Designed around a supercharged 18 cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-2800 radial engine, the P-47, at seven tons, weighed almost twice as much as most of its US and European contemporaries. The heavy fighter was armed with an equally heavy battery of eight .50 caliber machine guns — four in each wing. The XP-47B made its first flight in May of 1941, but was not ready for combat until the late winter of 1943.

The P-47 Thunderbolt, as it was now known, flew its first combat missions from England in April of 1943. It was in Europe that the Thunderbolt gained its reputation as the Juggernaut — able to give out punish as well as take it and bring its pilot home. The first two years of the war in the Pacific, however, were fought with early variants of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, the obsolescent Curtiss P-40 Warhawk, and the little Grumman F4F Wildcat. These early P-38s, and many of the P-40s, were replaced with newer variants of the Lockheed twin engine fighter, while the F4F was replaced by the Grumman F6F Hellcat and Vought F4U Corsair. The F6F and F4U were both powered by the P&W R-2800 engine used in the Republic P-47.

The first P-47s to reach the Pacific did so in late December of 1943 when a shipment of Thunderbolts arrived in Australia. The aircraft did so under the objections of Gen George Kenney, the commander of 5th Air Force, who wanted more — and longer ranged — P-38 Lightnings. Eventually, the P-47 found its way into five USAAF Numbered Air Forces comprising 14 Fighter Groups as well as 16 British RAF Squadrons and one Mexican Air Force Squadron. Like it or not, the Japanese were about to be on the receiving end of some Thunder in the Pacific.

The Seversky P-35 was in many respects the grandfather of the Republic P-47 series of fighters. The radial engine, cavernous fuselage, and elliptical wings and tail surfaces would all be repeated in the Thunderbolt. (Schmelzer)



THE 5th AIR FORCE

The 5th Air Force was originally formed as the Philippine Department Air Force on 16 August 1941 and activated there on 20 September. It became the Far East Air Force in October of 1941 and was redesignated the 5th Air Force in February of 1942. The 5th AF lost most of its men and equipment during the defense and subsequent surrender of the Philippine Islands to the Japanese in the spring of 1942. A few men did manage to get out of the Philippines in December of 1941. These men made it as far as Australia where they were sent to Java to fight a delaying action against the rapidly advancing Japanese in the Dutch East Indies. After the seizure of the Dutch East Indies by the Japanese, the remaining personnel formed the cadre for a reinforced 5th Air Force that was built up to defend Australia and the remaining Allied positions on New Guinea. Major General Lewis H. Brereton was the first commander, but he was replaced by Lt General George C. Kenney on 3 September 1942. Lt Gen Kenney served in that position until he was replaced by Lt Gen Ennis C. Whitehead on 15 June 1944. By then, the Allies were pushing the Japanese back to the north and the crisis in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) had ended.

The 5th Air Force had four P-47 Groups consisting of eleven squadrons. This odd number of squadrons was the result of the 49th Fighter Group's 9th Fighter Squadron flying P-47s for a brief period and the 348th Fighter Group having a fourth P-47 squadron. Initially, there were some grave doubts about the heavy P-47's ability to mix it up with the lighter, more nimble Japanese fighters such as the Mitsubishi A6M Zero and the Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar. It seemed that Republic's heavy-weight Jug would be totally unsuitable for operations in the Pacific. The skeptics in 5th Air Force were wrong and the Thunderbolt quickly proved that it was more than adequate to perform every task assigned to it.

The 5th AF operated four P-47 Groups with one other Group — the 49th FG — having a single P-47 Squadron. The 348th Fighter Group could claim the title of the Pioneer Thunderbolt group since it was the first one to fly the Jug in the theater. Despite the fact that one group — the 58th FG — was relegated to the tactical (ground attack) role, P-47 pilots in the theater ended the war with 511 enemy aircraft destroyed in aerial combat. The 348th Fighter Group was the top scorer with 326 victories, followed by the 35th FG with 165, the 58th FG with 12, and the 49th FG's 9th Fighter Squadron with eight. The 348th FG produced 20 aces including Col Neel Kearby, the highest scoring P-47 ace in the

Pacific. Kearby's 22 victories tied him with two others for fourth place in overall victories in the theater. Major William Dunham, also from the 348th FG, ranked sixth in the SWPA with a score of 16. Fifteen of these victories were gained while flying the Jug.

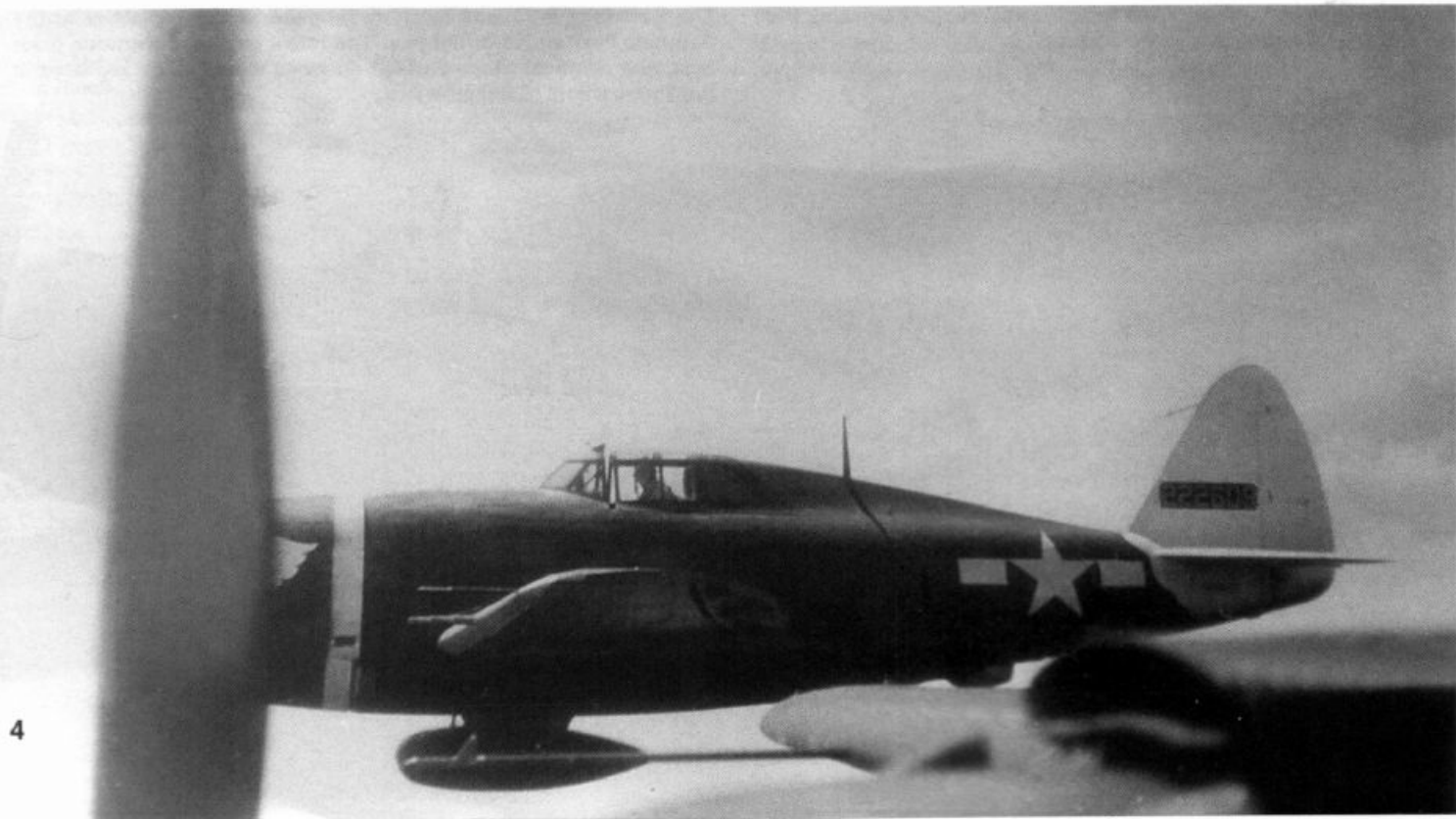
8th FIGHTER GROUP (36th FIGHTER SQUADRON)

The association of the 36th Fighter Squadron with the 8th Fighter Group dates back to the early 1930s. The 36th FS itself was formed during WW I at Camp Kelly, Texas in June of 1917. The 8th FG and its three subordinate squadrons — the 35th FS, 36th FS, and the 80th FS were quickly transferred from Mitchell Field, NY in early 1942 and sent to Australia to counter the Japanese who were rapidly moving through the Dutch East Indies and New Guinea and advancing towards Australia. All three of the 8th FG's squadrons were equipped with Bell P-39 and P-400 (an export variant of the P-39) Airacobras. Airacobras were used until October and November of 1943 when the 35th and 80th FSs began to convert to the twin-engine Lockheed P-38 Lightning. The 36th FS, however converted to the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. At one point in 1943, the Group was operating four different kinds of fighters — a situation that likely played havoc with the supply system. The 36th FS's use of the P-47 was brief, lasting only from 1943 to 1944, when the Squadron converted to the P-38 to bring it in line with the other two squadrons.

The 36th FS was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation for its action from February through March of 1944 when it was heavily involved in supporting the US Marines at Cape Gloster in the New Britain Islands. Like most other P-47 Groups in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) at this time, the 36th FS was heavily involved in providing close air support to the ground forces. Nevertheless, there were opportunities to engage Japanese aircraft attempting to hold back the Allied push to the north. Seventeen different pilots assigned to the 36th FS were each able to score a single kill while flying the P-47.

The Thunderbolts assigned to the 36th FS were camouflaged in the standard olive drab upper surfaces over neutral gray under surfaces camouflage scheme applied to other USAAF fighters in the theater — indeed the rest of the world as well. White theater ID markings were

A P-47D-5-RE of the 36th FS, 8th FG, cruises over the Schouten Islands in mid-1944. The Jug's winged aircraft letter is visible behind the propeller of an accompanying B-25 Mitchell bomber.



also carried on the wings, tail surfaces, and cowl ring. The 36th FS carried their individual aircraft numbers on the cowl. The aircraft numbers were painted white on the cowl and were augmented with a trailing wing design. Since white was the 36th FS unit color, many P-47s in the squadron carried white cowl flaps as well.

35th FIGHTER GROUP

Formation of the 35th Pursuit Group took place on 22 December 1939 with its activation occurring on 1 February 1940. Initially, the 35th PG was made up of the 18th, 20th, and 21st Pursuit Squadrons with the 34th PS being added shortly thereafter. The 70th PS was also added later in 1940. All of these squadrons flew the Curtiss P-36 Hawk. The 18th, 20th, and 21st PSs also flew Curtiss P-40s during this period, while the 20th and 34th PSs also flew Seversky P-35s and the 20th PS flew the obsolete Boeing P-26 Peashooter. The 21st and 34th PSs were sent to the Philippines in November of 1941. The Headquarters element and 70th PS sailed for Manila on 5 December 1941, but were diverted to Australia after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. On 15 January 1942 all of the squadrons were relieved and replaced by the 39th, 40th, and 41st Fighter Squadrons. The 35th PG was redesignated the 35th Fighter Group and concentrated in Australia where it became part of the 5th Air Force. The squadrons flew the Bell P-39 Airacobra (and an export variant of the Airacobra known as the P-400), while the 39th and 41st FSs also flew the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Conversion to P-47s began in November of 1943 while Lt Col Edwin A. Doss was the Group Commander. Lt Col Doss was later replaced by Lt Col Furlo S. Wagner. Doss returned to command the 35th FG as a full Colonel in May of 1944 and continued to lead the Group until the P-47s were replaced by North American P-51 Mustangs in March of 1945.

The first P-47 combat mission was flown on 15 December 1943 while the Group was operating out of Nadzab, New Guinea. On 24 and 25 December the Group covered the amphibious landings at Cape Gloucester and flew a total of 43 missions during the remainder of the month. On 2 January 1944 the 35th FG covered another amphibious landing at Saidor, and then flew combat air patrols, bomber escort, strafing, and dive bombing missions in the Wewak area. In June of 1944, new P-47D-23s began to arrive via Finschafen. The 35th FG flew their

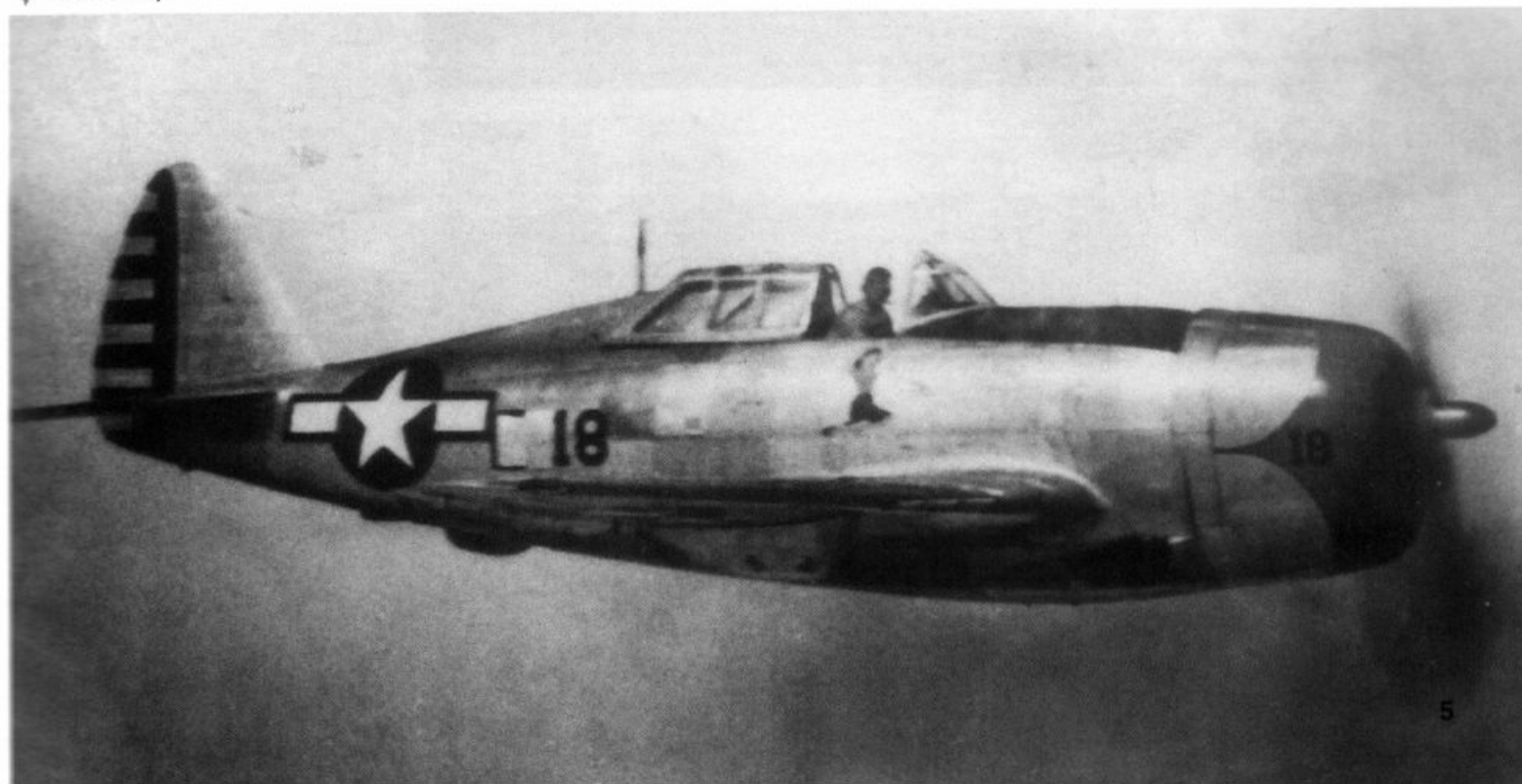
A natural metal P-47D-23 of the 39th FS, 35th FG cruises with the canopy open. The artwork on the fuselage, believed to be 'Daisy Mae' of the L'il Abner comic strip, was painted by pilot Jim Querns. Querns' artwork appeared on several other 39th FS Jugs. (Rogers via Dannacher)

first missions with their new P-47s on 3 August when they tried a new glide bombing technique at Noemfoor and the Vogel peninsula. On 7 August Major Cella led 26 P-47s on a lengthy 900 mile flight from Nadzab to Noemfoor. The Group later used three external fuel tanks and fuel conservation techniques taught by Col Charles A. Lindberg to fly missions of up to eight hours duration. Col Lindberg taught the Group's pilots how to use a combination of controlling cruising speed, propeller pitch, and fuel mixture to improve the Thunderbolt's range and endurance.

On 6 November 1944 15 P-47s of the 39th FS ran into a gaggle of Nakajima Ki-43 Oscars and shot down three and claimed two probables against the loss of two P-47s. The P-47s were lost due to unknown causes. On 10 February 1945 Capt Leroy Grosshuesche scored a triple victory while his 39th squadron mates added another seven in the last major dogfight for the 39th FS. Capt Grosshuesche flamed a Mitsubishi Ki-46 Dinah over Formosa and was credited with the Squadron's first night kill. The kill was also the 2500th victory scored by the 5th Air Force.

The 35th Fighter Group claimed 152 enemy aircraft destroyed over the course of the Pacific War. The Headquarters Flight claimed four, the 39th shot down 41, the 40th scored 55, and the 41st FS claimed 52. Pilots who achieved ace status while flying the Jug included Capt Leroy V. Grosshuesche of Ogden, Utah who scored seven of his eight victories while flying with the 39th Fighter Squadron. Capt William Howard Strand of the 40th FS and a native of Pasadena, California, scored all seven of his kills in the Jug. 1Lt James Dennis Murgavero of Port Huron, Michigan and assigned to the 41st FS, scored his six victories with the P-47. Capt Robert Roy Yaeger, Jr. of Laredo, Texas and the 40th FS scored three of his five kills with the Jug and Capt Alvard Jay Hunter of the 40th FS, and a native of Theresa, NY claimed three of his five victories in the Thunderbolt. 1Lt Ellis C. Baker, a graduate mechanical engineer from Oklahoma State University and a native of Jackson, Mississippi, scored four of his total of six kills in the Thunderbolt. Capt Edward Roland Hoyt of Industry, Illinois and a member of the 41st FS accounted for four of his five kills while flying Hoyt's Hoss, a razor-back P-47D-11. Hoyt later claimed his fifth kill while flying a P-47N with the 507th Fighter Group. This kill, a Mitsubishi G4M Betty, came about a half hour too soon or he would have been the last USAAF ace of the war.

Initially, the P-47Ds of the 35th FG were camouflaged with olive drab upper surfaces and neutral gray under surfaces. These Thunderbolts carried white theater tail markings until the invasion of the Philippines dur-





The 35th FG carried pre-war style red, white, and blue stripes on the rudders of their P-47s. Pilot, and 39th FS artist, Jim Querns sits on the tail of one of his squadron's Thunderbolts. Jim and his brother Bob stayed together throughout the war and were even in the same flight on one combat mission. (J. J. Querns)

ing the fall of 1944. By the summer of 1944, new P-47s were arriving in a natural metal finish. These aircraft carried black theater identification bands in lieu of the white bands on the camouflaged Thunderbolts. Each of the squadrons was also assigned a squadron color. These colors — light blue for the 39th, red for the 40th, and insignia blue for the 41st — were usually applied to the front of the cowl in a two or four pointed blaze. Some aircraft, however, simply painted the entire cowl in the squadron color. An individual aircraft number was carried on the lower lip of the cowl in white. The number was repeated on the fin in a band painted in the squadron color. Aircraft numbers 1-10 were assigned to the Headquarters Flight. The 39th FS carried 11 through 39, the 40th FS wore 40 through 69, and the 41st FS used 69 through 99. P-47s of the 40th FS added a red lightning flash to the upper fin and rudder. The natural metal Jugs wore the pre-war red, white, and blue tail stripes as a Group marking.

(Below) New P-47D-23 Thunderbolts of 39th FS, 35th FG skim over a cloud deck above Nadzab, New Guinea in July of 1944. Many of the Jugs are already wearing the red, white, and blue Group tail markings. (Bill Rogers via Dannacher)

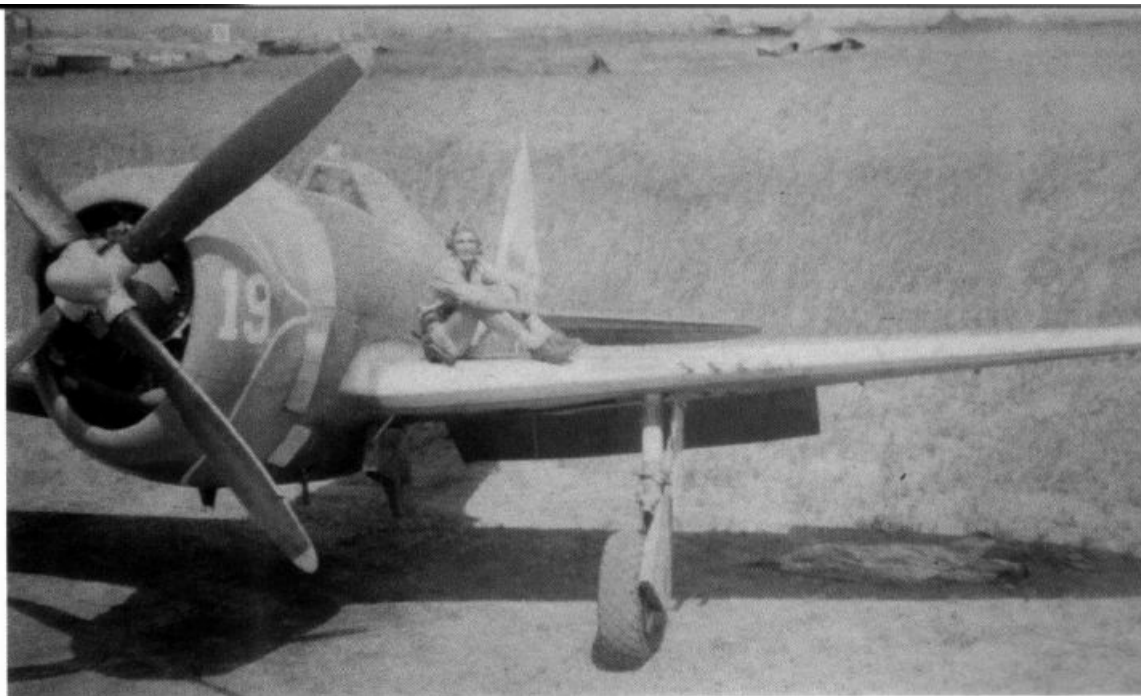


(Below) Lt Bill Rogers of the 39th FS, 35th FG flew Preacher's Passion III. The P-47D is carrying a fragmentation cluster bomb on the wing pylons and a 75 gallon drop tank on the centerline station.

Rogers became a Doctor of Divinity after war. (Rogers via Dannacher)



The 39th FS, 35th FG Jugs used a white bordered blue blaze on the cowl for a squadron marking. These markings came into use during the summer of 1944. The aircraft number was painted in white on the blaze. (J.J. Querns)



39th FS artist Jim Querns poses on the wing of a razorback P-47D. Another one of his creations, believed to be a rendition of the comic strip character 'Little Iodine', is painted on the forward fuselage. The 35th Fighter Group began to receive natural metal P-47s during the summer of 1944. (J. J. Querns)



Lt James J. Querns of the 39th FS, 35th FG flew Little Country Gentleman, also known as 'Little Max' from the Joe Palooka comic strip. Querns' paintings were done with a stick rather than a brush. Natural metal Thunderbolts usually wore an olive drab anti-glare panel along the upper surface of the fuselage in front of the windscreen. (J. J. Querns)





(Left) The 35th FG used a lightning bolt for a Group marking prior to the introduction of the later pre-war style rudder markings. This lightning bolt is painted on the white tail of a 40th FS P-47D. (Rogers via Dannacher)

(Below) This P-47D-28-RA (42-28488) of the 40th FS, 35th FG was parked on the ramp shortly before the Group moved to the Philippines. Red stripes have been added to the all-white tail mandated for use in the SWPA. (E.M. Summerich via P.M. Bowers)



(Below) A natural metal P-47D-28-RA (42-29080) of the 40th FS, 35th FG wears the new pre-war style Group tail markings. Natural metal

Jugs also wore black ID bands around the aft fuselage and wings. (E.M. Summerich via P. M. Bowers)



(Right) BABY DUMPLING, a character from the 'Blondie' comic strip, carries a single kill marking below the windscreen. The razorback P-47D was assigned to the 41st FS, 35th FG. (Lt. J. Querns)



(Below) The all-white tail markings used in the SWPA were gradually discontinued after the 35th FG moved out of the area and into the Philippines. This P-47D-28-RA of the 41st FS wears what is believed to be a yellow '85' on a blue tail band. Blue was the squadron color for the 41st FS. (Rogers via Dannacher)



49th FIGHTER GROUP

The 49th Pursuit Group came into being as a result of the US military build-up brought about by the war in Europe. The Group was authorized on 20 November 1940 and activated on 15 January 1941 at Selfridge Field, Michigan. The 49th PG was the first Group to reach any theater of war after Pearl Harbor. However, most of their operations were carried out with Curtiss P-40s and Lockheed P-38s for the duration of the war.

For a brief period the 9th FS was equipped with P-47s, however, the Thunderbolts were not well received by many of the pilots who favored the added safety feature of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning's twin engines. The squadron converted to the P-47Ds in November of 1943, but switched back to their P-38s in April of 1944. During this short period the 9th Fighter Squadron achieved a measure of success scoring eight victories with three of them being claimed on 10 December 1943. During the time the 9th FS flew Thunderbolts, the other two squadrons had shot down a combined total of 17 enemy aircraft, so the Thunderbolt did at least as well as the other fighters in the Group. Three

Bigasburd, a razorback P-47D of the 9th FS, 49th FG, was flown by Lt. H.R. Oglesby. Some pilots wasted little time in applying artwork to their mounts. (Cheatham Gupton)

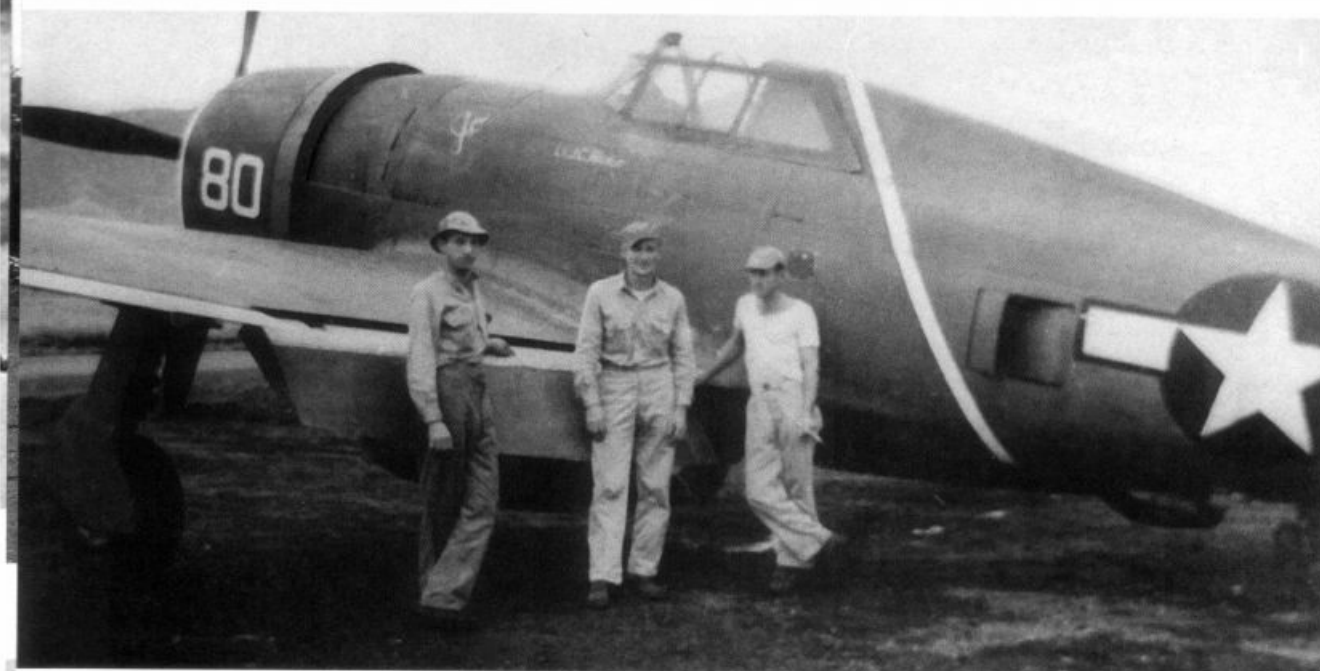




Lt J.A. Poston of the 9th FS, 49th FG flew Dopey. All of the 9th FS Jugs were razorback P-47Ds and camouflaged with olive drab upper surfaces over neutral gray under surfaces. (Cheatham Gupton)

aces added to their totals while flying the P-47 — Lt Col Gerry Johnson added two to his score and Major Wallace Jordan and Capt Ralph Wandrey scored single victories. Despite the fact that he had scored a kill with his P-47, Capt Wandrey did not like the Jug. One story has it that while his flight was so equipped he made his men salute every time a P-38 went by. Even after Lt Col Neel Kearby of the 348th Fighter Group came over and demonstrated the abilities of the P-47 in mock dog fights with other pilots, including Maj Richard I. (Dick) Bong, the P-47 still failed to make much of an impression on the 9th Squadron's pilots. Col Kearby even fought Major Bong to a draw although some 49th pilots thought Bong had a slight edge.

The 9th Fighter Squadron's P-47Ds were painted olive drab and neutral gray. The Jugs also wore white tails and wing leading edges as a theater identification marking. A white cowl band was applied to most of the Squadron's P-47s. Additionally, an individual aircraft number was normally painted on the cowl in white. The numbers ran from 70 through 99, but it is believed that the numbers from 93 and up were not used on any aircraft. Some of the 49th FG's P-47s carried names and artwork despite the short time the aircraft were in service. Thunderbolts that carried art work usually had it applied to the fuselage below the cockpit.



Jo was flown by the Lt James C. Haislip while assigned to the 9th FS, 49th FG. The white stripe on fuselage indicates Lt Haislip was a flight leader. Two stripes indicated a Squadron commander. (Cheatham Gupton)



Lady Katy was a P-47D-16-RE (42-75927) assigned to the 9th FS of the 49th Fighter Group. This Thunderbolt wears a black painted cowl rather than the more usual white. A black band is also applied across the tail. The Jug is carrying the popular 165 gallon P-38 style drop tanks on the wing pylons. (J.P. Gallagher)

58th FIGHTER GROUP

The 58th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) came into being on 15 January 1941 at Selfridge Field, Michigan after being authorized on 20 November 1940. The Group could easily have called itself a 'Vagabond Group' due to its extensive traveling within the Zone of the Interior before finally being sent overseas. Initially the Group was comprised of the 67th, 68th, and 69th Pursuit Squadrons — all flying the Curtiss P-40. The Group moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 5 October 1941 and trained there until the 67th and 68th FSs were transferred to the 347 Pursuit Group. The remaining squadron, the 69th PS, moved to Dale Mabry Field, Florida on 3 March 1942 where the Group was brought back up to strength with the arrival of the 310th and 311th Pursuit Squadrons.

The Group, under the command of Col Gwen G. Adkinson, was redesignated the 58th Fighter Group in May of 1942. The 58th FG continued to train at Dale Mabry Field until it was relocated to Drew Field, Florida and then Sarasota, Florida during the summer of 1942. The 58th FG moved to Richmond Army Air Base, Virginia in mid-October of 1942 where the fighter squadrons traded their aging P-40s for brand new Republic P-47s. More moves followed through the winter of 1942/1943 — first to Philadelphia Municipal Airport, Pennsylvania and then to Bradley Field, Connecticut where the Group was split again. The 69th FS moved to Bradley Field, Massachusetts, while the 310th and 311th FSs were sent to Hills Grove, Rhode Island. The Group then proceeded to Grenier Field, New Hampshire on 15 September 1943 in preparation for a move to the Pacific combat zones.

Group personnel traveled across the US by train bound for Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California. After a short stay they were marched into Pittsburg to board a river steamer for the trip to the port of embarkation in San Francisco. In San Francisco, the men boarded the *New Amsterdam* — the sixth largest and fourth fastest passenger liner in the world. The men were served only two meals a day during the passage. After a brief stop in Wellington, New Zealand, the *New Amsterdam* arrived in Sydney, Australia after a 21 day voyage. An advance party of group personnel flew from Sydney to Port Moresby, New Guinea to set up the new base. The remainder of the Group sailed from Townsville on the SS *Willis De Vanter* which promptly ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef. Some of the men were transferred to other ships including the SS *George Sterling*. The men finally arrived at Dobodura where they settled in on 28 and 29 December 1943. By this time the men must have been ready for some rest, but they got ready for combat instead.

The 311th Fighter Squadron flew the Group's first mission on 2 February 1944 when eight P-40s escorted Douglas C-47 transports to Saidor on the northeastern coast of New Guinea. More

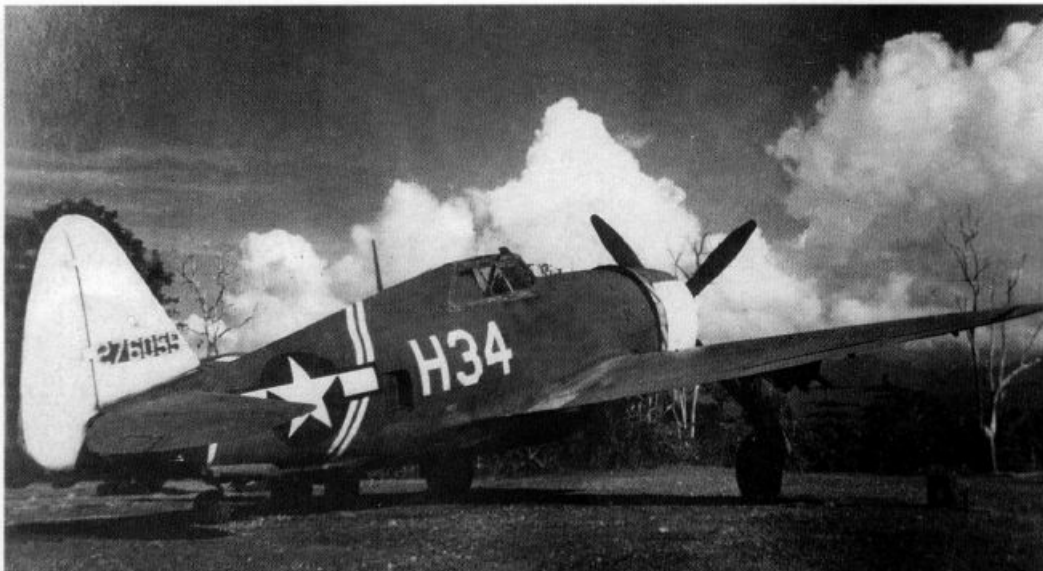


"SLEEPY TIME GAL" was a P-47D-15-RA assigned to the 69th FS, 58th FG and flown by 1Lt Herbert B. Emrich. The white cowl and letter 'A' on the fuselage side were used as squadron markings by the 69th FS. A portion of the canopy frame appears to be painted yellow. The Jug is carrying natural metal P-38 style drop tanks.



Lt Emrich and "SLEEPY TIME GAL" of the 69th FS, 58th FG cruise low over the waters off the New Guinea coast sometime during early 1944. The olive drab camouflage has been partially oversprayed onto the vertical tail surfaces. (Chuck Mayer)

Major Jack McClure, the 310th FS commander, flew this P-47D-16-RE (42-76055). The two white fuselage stripes indicated the squadron commander's aircraft. This Thunderbolt was lost with pilot Lt Clement Theed near Wewak, New Guinea on 11 April 1944. Theed was engaged in a search mission looking for missing pilots of the 311th FS at the time.





A bomb laden flight P-47Ds of the 310th FS, 58th FG climbs out for a mission off the coast of New Guinea in early 1944.



* H50 was a P-47D assigned to the 310th FS, 58th FG at Dobodura, New Guinea. The cowl, tail band, and possibly the canopy frame are painted yellow. The Jug sits on a pierced steel planking (PSP) ramp. PSP kept the ramp and taxiways from turning into a quagmire during the rainy season. (E.M. Sommerich via P.M. Bowers)

THE PIED PIPER was part of the 310th FS, 58th FG. The P-47D-16-RE (42-275885) has alternate yellow and olive drab cowl flaps and carries its nose art on a yellow cowl. (E.M. Sommerich via P.M. Bowers)



such missions followed along with escorting bombers and strafing Japanese airfields and other installations. The 58th FG also provided air cover for convoys to the Admiralty Islands before moving on to Noemfoor in August of 1944. The Group worked over Japanese airfields and installations on Ceram, Halmahera, and the Kai Islands before being moved up to the Philippines — first to San Roque on Leyte and then to San Jose on Mindoro Island.

The 58th was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for an action that took place on 26 December 1944 off Mindoro. At 1800 hours the Group was notified that a Japanese task force consisting of a battleship, a heavy cruiser, and six destroyers was heading for Mindoro. Only 32 P-47s were available for the mission, so Col. Atkinson picked his 31 most experienced pilots for what seemed to be a suicide mission. The 69th FS sent up 14 Jugs with the 311th FS furnishing the remainder. Col. Atkinson led the Group off at 2015 hours while the strip was under attack by Japanese aircraft. The rest of the 69th and 311th Squadrons followed into the growing darkness. Lt Joe Borunda ran off the runway in the dark and crashed. Major Self and his 69th FS pilots did not get off the field until 2130 hours. One more P-47 was lost on takeoff and another had to return with engine trouble — the last Jug did not get airborne until 2300 hours.

Formation flying was impossible due to the darkness, so it was every man for himself. One of the first pilots to take off spotted the phosphorescent wakes of the Japanese ships at 2100 hours. At first the pilots tried to attack while keeping the moon behind the ships, but after the first pass and the shooting began, the enemy warships lit up like the Fourth of July. The ships' gunners could not see the P-47s until the Jugs fired so the pilots came in from all directions — staying on the deck and flying at 350-400 mph. After a strafing pass the Thunderbolt pilots switched on their landing lights after they were out of range to avoid collisions while they climbed out. The pilots turned them off again after they turned back for another pass. After the first passes, the Jugs concentrated on the destroyers — the battleship and heavy cruiser were simply putting up too much anti-aircraft fire. The pilots averaged nine strafing runs on the Japanese ships before running out of ammunition. During the battle the 69th FS lost three aircraft and the 311th FS lost six, but six of the downed pilots were rescued while the other three were listed as Missing in Action (MIA). The action saved the forces on Mindoro from the serious threat of a Japanese naval bombardment. Col. Atkinson received a Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), Majors Orden and Self each received the Silver Star, and twenty three other pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

The Group followed the progress of the war northward and moved to Okinawa in July of 1945. From Okinawa, the Group attacked rail-

small airfields, and other installations in Korea and the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. The 58th FG continued these strikes until the war ended.

The 58th Fighter Group was credited with only 12 enemy aircraft destroyed in aerial combat, primarily due to the nature of the Group's mission — ground attack — and the lack of aerial opposition. The 69th FS led the scoring with five victories, followed by the 311th FS with four, the 310th FS with two and Headquarters Flight with one. Lt Edward E. Sharp of the 311th FS had a triple kill on 24 December 1944. No other pilot had more than a single victory.

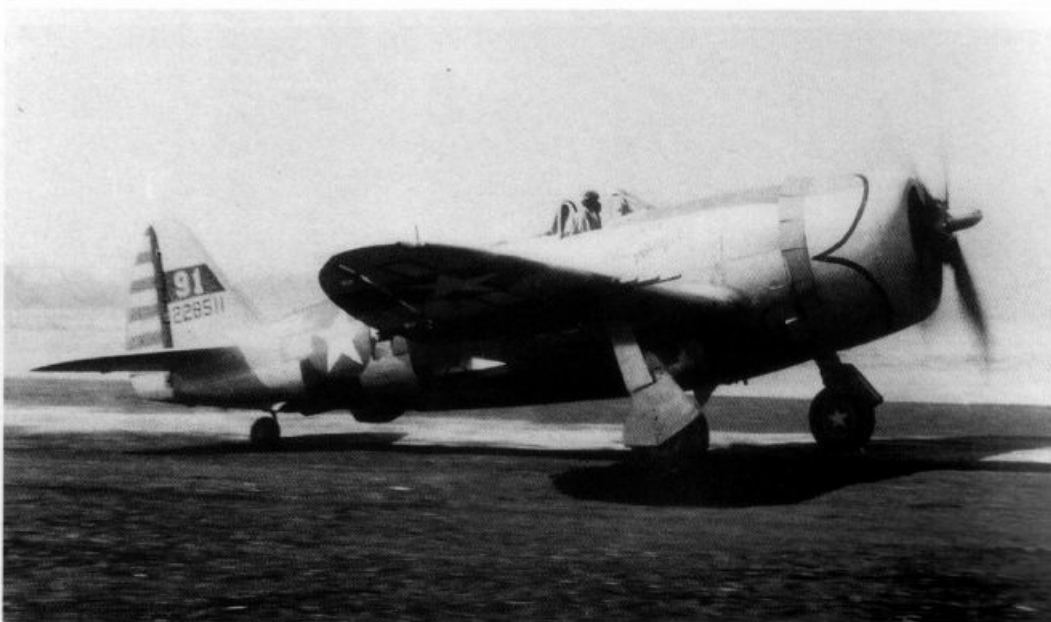
The 58th Fighter Group flew the P-47 exclusively in combat. Their P-47Ds were camouflaged in the standard scheme of olive drab over neutral gray and carried white tails and wing leading edges as a theater identification marking. The yellow serial numbers on the vertical tail surfaces were masked off when the tails were painted white. This left the yellow numbers on an olive drab rectangle. The engine cowlings were painted in the squadron colors — **white** for the 69th, **yellow** for the 310th, and **blue** for the 311th FS. The anti-glare panels on top of the cowlings remained olive drab.

Each of the squadrons was also given a letter/number code to be worn on the fuselage sides. The 69th FS used the letter **A** and a number from 1 to 33. The letter and numbers were painted in white and were 36 inches high. The 310th FS used the letter **H** and numbers from 34 through 66, while the 311th FS carried the letter **V** and numbers 67 through 99. The letter and numbers for both squadrons were painted in white, but the characters were only 24 inches high. Squadron commanders carried a double white stripe around the fuselage just behind the cockpit. Flight leaders were denoted by a single white stripe.

When the new natural metal finished P-47Ds and D-21s arrived during the fall of 1944, the white wing leading edges and tail surfaces were retained. Cowl markings were changed to a 12-inch horizontal band at the mid point of the cowl. The 310th and 311th Squadrons kept their yellow and blue colors respectively, but the 69th FS changed from white to **red** since red was easier to see on the natural metal cowl. Some of the 310th pilots simply switched their old olive drab cowlings to the new Thunderbolts. The previously assigned fuselage letter and number codes were retained, but these were now rendered in black — again to make them more visible on the natural metal surfaces. Later Jugs also received black 24-inch wide identification bands around the fuselage. These bands were painted over the code letters. Still later the Thunderbolt's rudders were painted in the pre-war red, white, and blue stripes. Another variation was a vertical stripe on the fin which carried the aircraft number near the top.



Lt Robert Knight flew this P-47D-25-RE while assigned to the 310th FS, 58th FG in Okinawa. The Jug carries an asymmetrical load of one 1000 lb bomb under the starboard wing pylon and one 165 gallon drop tank under the port wing. A 75 gallon tank is mounted on the centerline rack. Knight finished the war with two victories. (Peter Kampman)



The 58th Fighter Group eventually received natural metal P-47Ds equipped with bubble canopies. The Group markings reverted to the pre-war style red, white, and blue rudder stripes after the 58th moved to the Philippines. The light blue cowl blaze on this P-47D-28-RA is believed to be outlined in black.

An early, natural metal P-47D of the 69th FS, 58th FG taxis into its dispersal area after returning from a mission during the fall of 1944. Camouflaged and natural metal P-47s, as well as razorback and bubble canopied Jugs often appeared together in the same unit as new aircraft were received from the US. (Stanaway)



348th FIGHTER GROUP

Orders creating the 348th Fighter Group were cut on 24 September 1942. The Group was activated at Mitchell Field, New York on 30 September 1942. Col Neel Kearby assumed command in October of 1942 while the Group was based at Bradley Field, Connecticut. The Group was originally slated for duty in Europe since it had trained on P-47s at Westover Field, Massachusetts, but was sent to the Southwest Pacific Area and the 5th Air Force. The 348th Fighter Group, consisting of the 340th, 341st, and 342nd Fighter Squadrons, arrived in theater on 23 June 1943 and operated out of Port Moresby, New Guinea until December. The 58th FG then began a series of moves dictated by the progress of the war. The Group first moved to Finschhafen, Saidor, Wadke, and Noemfoor in New Guinea, then to Leyte, San Marcelino, and Floridablanca in the Philippines, and finally to Ie Shima. After the war the Group moved to Japan and became part of the occupation forces in October of 1945.

The 348th Fighter Group earned its first DUC for its part in covering the Allied landings on New Britain and its follow-on tactical support from 16 through 31 December 1943. The Group was involved in almost daily contact with the Japanese during the latter half of 1943 and the

first few months of 1944. The Allies were pushing up through Guinea and its surrounding islands, while the Japanese were throwing everything they had into the battle to keep the Allies out. It was a rich environment. Col Neel Kearby, the leading P-47 ace of the 5th Force, scored 12 of his 22 victories while flying Thunderbolts with the 348th FG. Kearby scored 6 kills on 11 October 1943 when he shot two Mitsubishi A6M Zeros, two Mitsubishi A6M3 Hamps (a cloverwing variant of the Zero), and two Kawasaki Ki-61 Tonys. Col Kearby earned the Medal of Honor for his efforts that day. Kearby was promoted to the staff at V Fighter Command during November of 1943. Col Robert R. Rowland took command of the 348th FG. Nevertheless, Col Kearby took every opportunity to return to the Group and fly combat missions. Col Kearby continued to score victories throughout the first months of 1944, but was killed in action on 5 March 1944, and soon after engaging and destroying a Japanese bomber, Kearby was believed to have been the victim of a Japanese Nakajima Ki-43 fighter that took advantage of Kearby's low altitude and airspeed. Col Kearby's Thunderbolts bore the name *Firey Ginger* from I through IV.

In early 1944 the Group conducted a series of missions in preparation



(Above) Early P-47Ds used by the 348th FG lacked wing pylons for bombs or drop tanks. This Jug does carry the flattened 200 gallon drop tank on the centerline and early style US insignia on the wings and fuselage. Early Thunderbolts also had straight cowl flaps which lacked the scallop on the lower two flaps.

(Below) This P-47D-2-RE (42-8077) carries a 200 gallon drop tank on the centerline. The Jug has the white tail and wing leading edge stripes common to most Allied fighters in the SWPA. A white stripe has been added to the lower cowl and carried on to the drop tank. The aircraft number '12' has been repeated on the cowl stripe. This P-47 also appears to have a red surround to the fuselage insignia placing the time during the summer of 1943.



ewer the Philippine invasion, hitting Japanese installations, air fields, and ing. Once Allied forces had gained a foothold in the Philippine ge. the 348th FG moved up to Leyte and began flying combat air Air. convoy and bomber escort missions, close air support, and air the missions.

During this period the 348th FG merited a second DUC while escorted bombers to Clark Field on Christmas Eve 1944. The Japanese came by a force estimated at 75 fighters. The 348th FG repulsed all of attempts to engage the bombers and shot down 33 Japanese aircraft during the ensuing battle. Capt Ben Foulis flamed three Japanese fighters while 11 other pilots destroyed two enemy aircraft. The 348th FG converted to the North American P-51 Mustang in the January of 1945.

The 348th Fighter Group scored 326 victories and produced 20 aces while flying the P-47 Thunderbolt. The 342nd Fighter Squadron was the highest scoring squadron with 118 kills. The 342nd FS was followed by the 341st FS with 68, the 340th FS with 66, the 460th FS with 46, and the Group HQ Flight with 28.

Col Robert R. Rowland of Lodi, Ohio was the Group deputy commander and he assumed command after Kearby moved up to V Fighter

Command. Rowland was one of the original members of the Group and he served as commander until relieved in June of 1945. During his tour he shot down eight Japanese aircraft, earned a Silver Star, a DFC with two Oak Leaf Clusters (OLCs) and the Air Medal with four OLCs. His favorite combat tactic was to always maintain at least 250 mph air speed since a P-47 climbing at that speed would quickly out distance any Japanese fighter. Once Rowland had climbed to higher altitude, he could quickly dive back down and nothing could stay with the Jug in a fight.

Major William D. Dunham of Nezperce, Idaho was the second ranking ace of the 348th FG and commander of the 460th Fighter Squadron's "Black Rams". Dunham's final score was 16 victories with 15 of these scored while flying the P-47. He had destroyed three Aichi D3A Val dive bombers on 21 December 1943 and then claimed two A6M3 Zeros and two Ki-43 Oscars on 7 January 1944. Dunham was awarded a Silver

Star, DSC, DFC, and an Air Medal for his efforts.

Lt Col William M. Banks became Rowland's deputy commander in the 460th FS. Banks also took part in the first P-47 mission and the first dive bombing mission. He flew two tours of duty, shot down nine Japanese aircraft, and earned a DFC with two OLCs and an Air Medal with three OLCs. Banks especially liked the P-47's high altitude performance, fire power, high diving speed, and all around invulnerability.

Major Walter G. Benz, Jr., the commander of the 342nd FS ended the war with eight kills, 399 combat missions, and 806 combat hours. He summed up the average mission as being 350 to 500 miles of sweating out fuel supplies over long stretches of jungle — often extremely fatiguing on the pilot. Benz named all of his Jugs Dirty Old Man.

Operations Officer Major Edward F. Roddy of Cleveland, Ohio spent 24 months in the SWPA flying 550 combat missions and scoring eight victories. He scored all of his kills between November of 1943 and February of 1944, earning a Silver Star, DFC with four OLCs, and an Air Medal with two OLCs. Roddy was (perhaps) somewhat methodical. His pet peeve late in the war was when a Japanese aircraft was spotted everyone made a mad dash to shoot it down. Over eagerness caused many of the Group's pilots to throw caution to the winds — and that



(Above) Major Robert R. Rowland flew *Miss Mutt*/THE PRIDE OF LODI, OHIO while assigned to the 340th FS, 348th FG. The P-47D-2-RE was a presentation aircraft from the citizens of Lodi. *Miss Mutt* was Rowland's personal marking. Five kill markings are painted below the windscreen. (R.M. Hill)

(Below) An olive drab over neutral gray P-47D of the 340th FS, 348th FG sits on the ramp in New Guinea. The white tail and wing leading edges were used as a theater ID marking in the Southwest Pacific Area. The cowl blaze is yellow, while the blaze trim and number are white.





(Above) Major David A. Campbell (left) and Capt Samuel V. Blair of the 341st FS, 348th FG pose in front of Miss Jacqueline, an early production razorback P-47D. Sam Blair scored seven victories in the Jug — a twin-engine bomber, a dive bomber, and five fighters. Miss Jacqueline has two different tread styles on her tires and the starboard wheel has an off-center concentric ring design on the cover plate.



(Above) Lt William B. Foulis of the 341st FS, 348th FG scored six kills while flying the Jug. One victory was a twin engine Mitsubishi Ki-46 Dinah reconnaissance aircraft while the remaining five were single engine fighters. The P-47 was equipped with a pull down step and a pair of fold out hand-holds to help the pilot get aboard. Mountain climbing skills were no doubt helpful when laden with a Mae West, parachute, and survival equipment.



could be dangerous. Roddy later transferred to the 58th Fighter Group as an operations officer and eventually became the 58th FG's Command Officer.

Other aces of the 348th FG included Majors G. Davis, Moore, and E. S. Popek, Jr., Capt Blair, M. H. Brown, and Lt M. Grant — all with 7 victories. Capt H. Fleischer and W. B. Foulis, Jr. scored six kills, while Capts Dikovitsky and R. H. Knapp and G. Della, R. D. Gibb, L. F. O'Neil, and C. Sutcliffe, all claimed five kills.

The 348th FG's P-47Ds wore standard olive drab and neutral camouflage scheme. The wing leading edges and the entire tail surfaces were painted white. This was a theater identification marking and was seen on other US, Australian, and New Zealand fighters as well. Additionally, the tip of the tail fin was usually painted with the squadron color — yellow for the 340th FS, red for the 341st FS, and blue for the 342nd FS. The 460th FS joined the 348th FG in September of 1944 and wore black as its squadron color. Each of the squadrons was also assigned a range of individual aircraft numbers: 1 to 25 for the 340th FS, 26-50 for the 341st FS, and 51-100 for the 342nd FS. Aircraft numbers were the olive drab Thunderbolts wore either yellow or white, four inches high, and applied to the lower third of the cowl. There were some variations in this practice. When the 460th joined the Group the numbers were changed — 1-9 were assigned to HQ Flight, 10-30 to the 340th FS, 31-60 to the 341st FS, 61-90 to the 342nd FS, and 91-120 to the 460th FS.

The markings naturally changed with the arrival of natural metal P-47Ds and D-25s. A vertical band in the squadron color was added to the portion of the tail fin and red and white horizontal stripes were added to the rudder in the old pre-war style. Aircraft numbers were applied to the vertical band on the fin. Black theater identification bands were added in November of 1944.

(Left) Lt R. W. Anderson of the 342nd FS, 348th FG stands atop My Ba-a-aby II, a razorback P-47D. Anderson scored one kill — a Mitsubishi A6M Zero — while flying with the 341st FS. My Ba-a-aby II's aircraft number 42 on the lower cowl indicates she was — at least at one time — assigned to the Group's 342nd FS.



(Above) Frankie was flown by Capt S.V. Blair of the 341st FS, 348th FG during the late spring and early summer of 1943. White bars have been added to the US insignia and the white overspray beyond the resulting tape gives the impression of a dark border on the white tail surfaces. The pilot's Mae West hangs on the review mirror above the windscreen.

(Below) A ground crewman on the wing guides a P-47D-2-RE (42-8092) through propeller blown dust at Dobodura, New Guinea in October of 1943. The Jug was assigned to the 341st FS of the 348th FG. (USMC)





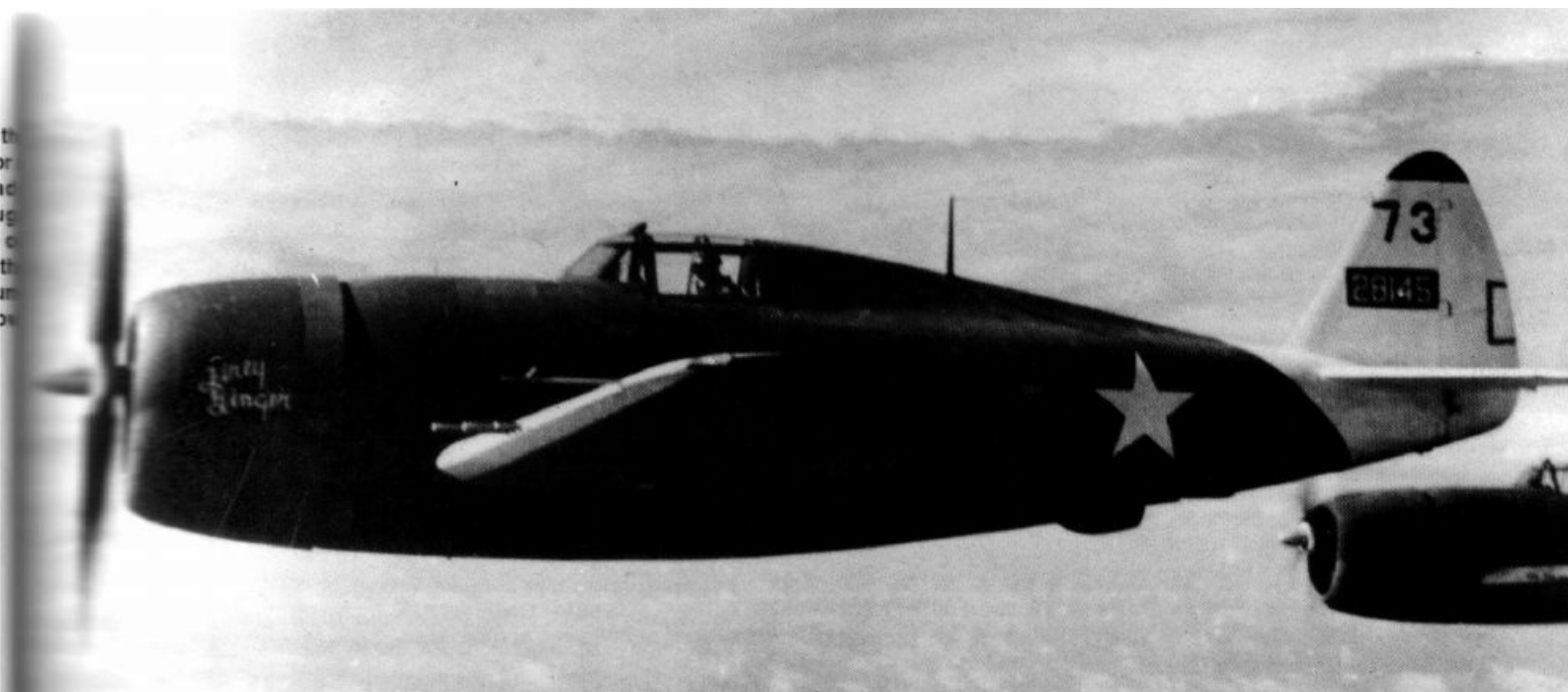
A pair of 341st FS Jugs sit on the ramp just before taxiing out for a mission. Melanie has already started her engine. Both Jugs carry the Squadron's red blaze on the cowl. The Thunderbolt in the foreground has the aircraft number repeated on the lower cowling.



Miss Lorraine, a P-47D-23-RA (42-27886) of the 341st FS, 348th FG, taxis in from a mission. The natural metal Jug retains the white tail recognition markings, but also has the later pre-war style Group stripes on the rudder. Black ID bands, a red cowl and propeller spinner, and an olive drab anti-glare panel complete *Miss Lorraine's* paint scheme (Stanaway)

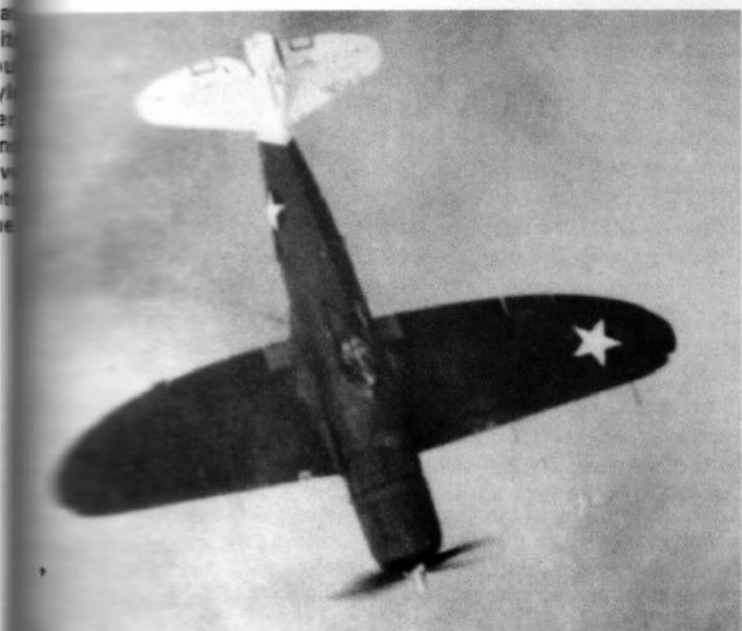


This P-47D-23-RA (42-27883) hit a C-47 transport while taking off at Tarakan. Both the pilot and the slightly bent Jug wound up on the beach. The aircraft wears the red cowl and vertical fin band of the 341st FS. The aircraft number (44) is painted on the fin band. The lack of black ID bands indicate the incident likely occurred prior to November of 1944.

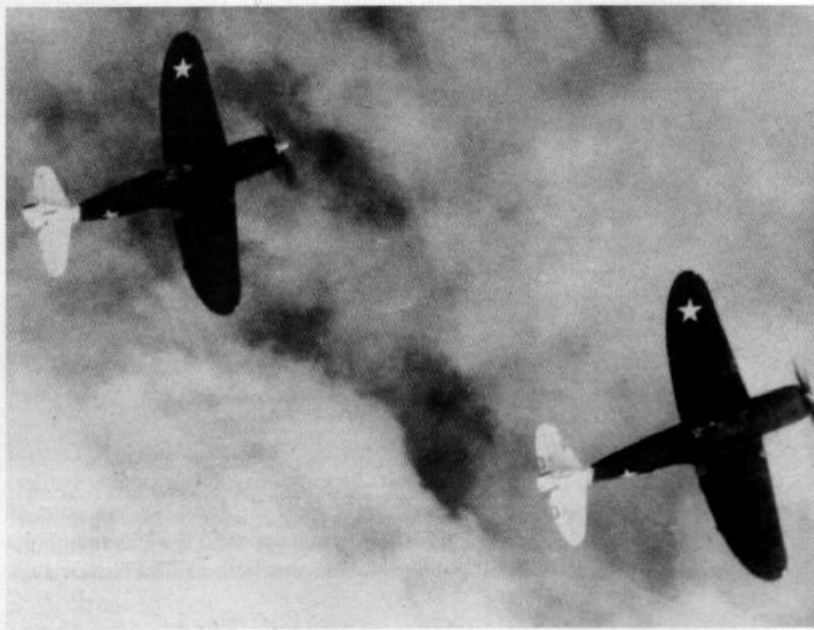


(Below) Col Neel Kearby, the commander of the 348th FG, flew at least four Thunderbolts named *Firey Ginger*. This *Firey Ginger* is a

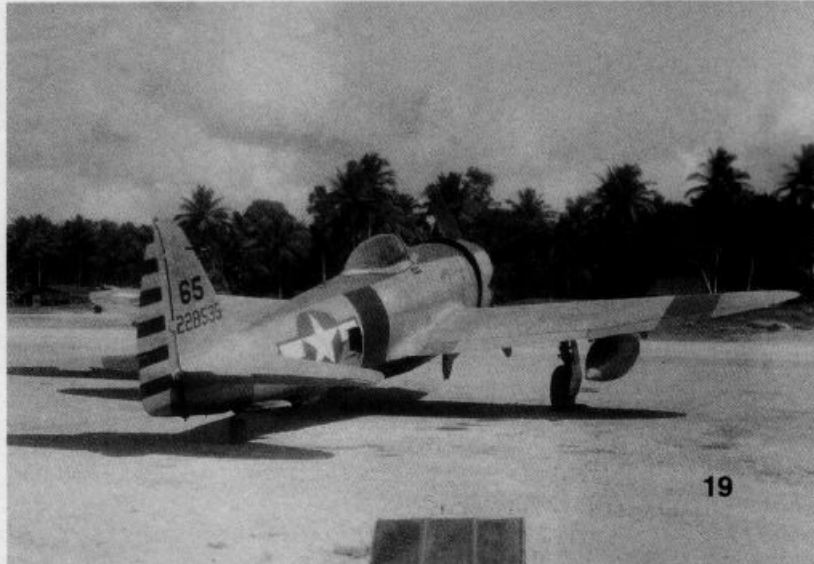
P-47D-2-RE (42-8145) and wears the blue fin tip of the 342nd FS.



(Above, Above Right, and Below) Early production P-47D Thunderbolts of the 348th Fighter Group skim over patchy clouds during the spring of 1943. The white tails allow the aft fuselage to blend in with the cloud deck, giving the Jugs the appearance of seven-ton dragonflies.



(Below) This P-47D-28-RA (42-28535) was assigned to the 342nd FS, 348th FG on Leyte in the Philippines sometime after November of 1944. The tail marking is unusual — only the red stripes have been applied — indicating they may be a work in progress. Black ID bands are painted on the aft fuselage and outer wing panels.



THE 7th AIR FORCE

The 7th Air Force was originally formed as the Hawaiian Air Force on 19 October 1940 and activated on 1 November. The Hawaiian Air Force was responsible for the defense of the Hawaiian Islands chain and particularly the US Pacific Fleet base at Pearl Harbor. During this time the Hawaiian AF fighter units were equipped with the Boeing P-26 Peashooter, the Curtiss P-36 Hawk, and the Curtiss P-40. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the Hawaiian AF was rapidly reinforced. Major General Frederick L. Martin, the Hawaiian AF commander was replaced by Maj Gen Clarence L. Tinker on 18 December 1941. The Hawaiian AF was redesignated the 7th Air Force in February of 1942. Maj Gen Tinker was replaced by Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson in June of 1942. Davidson was replaced a mere two weeks later by Maj Gen Willis H. Hale. Hale was in command when the first 7th AF units were sent into combat in the central and western Pacific. Maj Gen Robert W. Douglass took over on 15 April 1944 and served until Maj Gen Thomas D. White assumed command on 23 June 1945. Maj Gen White remained in command of the 7th AF until the war ended. The 7th AF was often referred to as the 'Pineapple Air Force' due to its location in Hawaii.

The 7th Air Force had four Republic P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter Groups, although one — the 18th Fighter Group — was never fully operational. The other three groups included the 15th FG, 318th FG, and the 508th FG. Neither the 15th nor the 508th FGs flew any combat missions with the Thunderbolt. The 318th FG finally got into combat late in the war flying the long range P-47N. The Group achieved a remarkable record during its comparatively short combat career which indicated that the P-47N could have been one of the finest fighters of the war.

The 7th Air Force Fighter Groups were, for the most part, relegated to serving as the air defense force for the Hawaiian Islands. These Groups flew extensive combat air patrols around the islands waiting for an enemy that would never return. Seventh AF Groups, both bomber and fighter, were also involved in training replacement pilots for other units already on the front lines in the Pacific Theater. Seventh AF ground crews were called upon to repair battle damaged aircraft for other units as well. Seventh Air Force pilots then ferried the repaired aircraft to the forward areas and, at times, remained in the combat zones to join other units.

In some cases, a few squadrons were detached and sent to the Central or South Pacific to reinforce units already engaged in critical battles. These detached units flew in combat against the Japanese, but none of them flew the P-47. The 15th Fighter Group operated P-47 Thunderbolts from April of 1944 until January of 1945, while the 18th FG flew Jugs

from 1943 until 1945. The 508th FG was equipped with the Thunderbolt from 1944 through 1945.

The 15th Fighter Group

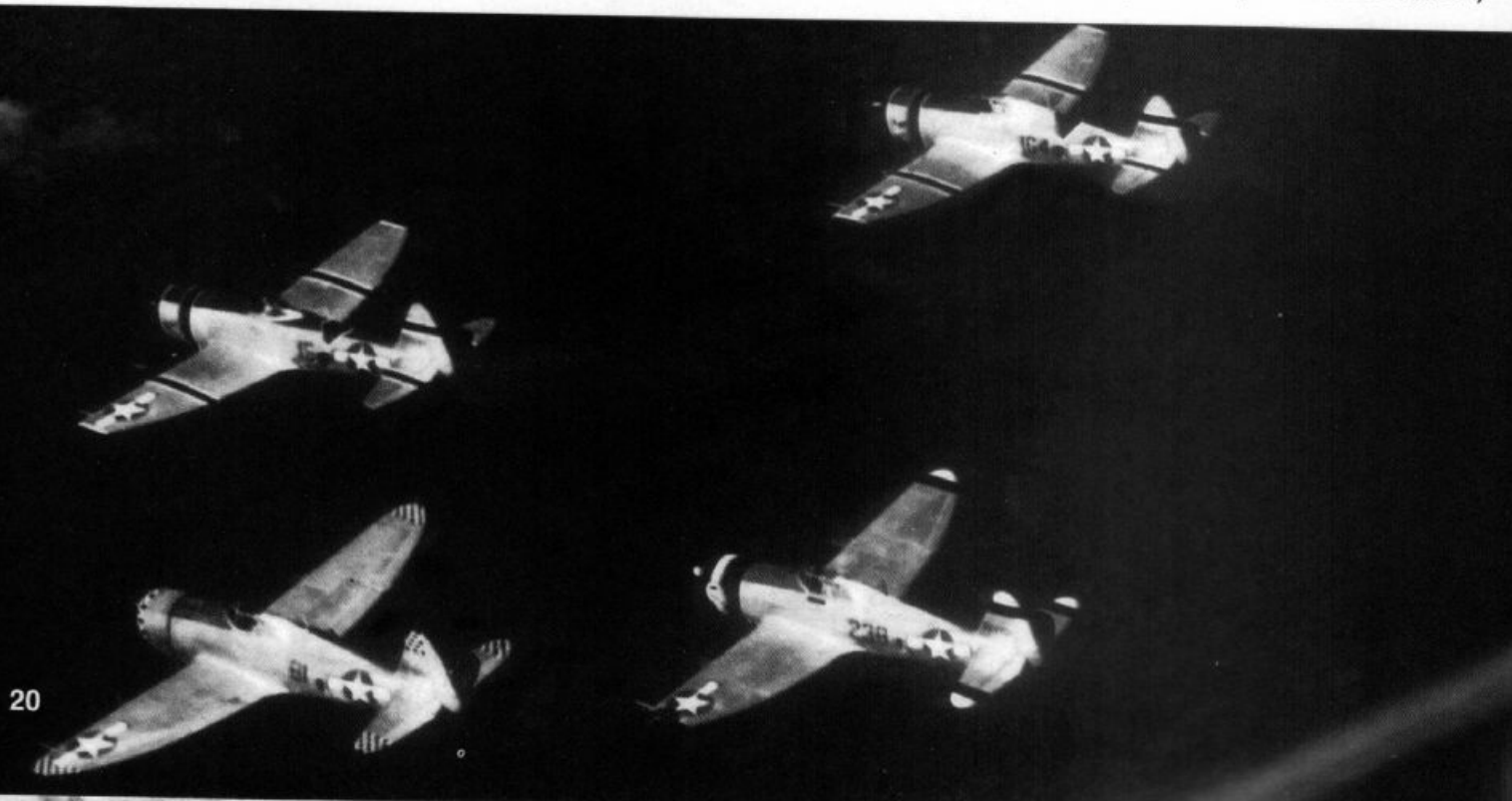
The 15th Pursuit Group was authorized on 20 November 1941 and activated in Hawaii on 1 December 1940. The Group was caught in the Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. After Pearl Harbor the 15th PG was reorganized, remanned, and assigned to the 7th Air Force where it became part of the Hawaiian Defense Squadrons. The 15th PG was redesignated a Fighter Group in May of 1942. At various times elements of the 15th FG were detached and sent into combat in the South or Central Pacific Theaters. Eventually, the Group was composed of the 45th, 47th, and 78th Fighter Squadrons, but at one time or another the 6th, 12th, 18th, and 46th Fighter Squadrons were assigned to the 15th Fighter Group.

In June of 1944 the 15th FG moved across Oahu from Wheeler Field to Bellows Field and began receiving P-47Ds. The Group received the Jugs during the initial delivery, but by the end of August of 1944 the Thunderbolts were on hand despite losing five in training accidents. In August Lt Col James O. Beckwith, Jr. received orders alerting the 15th FG that it would soon be moving to the combat area. In September the Group began loading their equipment on ships, however, on 1 September 1944 the Group was ordered to unload their equipment and return to Bellows Field, and stand down. The disappointment was high and morale was low. The most exciting incident during this period took place when 2Lt Dick Schroepet of the 78th Fighter Squadron had a mid-air collision with a Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Schroepet returned to Bellows and landed safely despite losing about four feet of his wing. In another incident 1Lt Richard J. Condrick, possibly out of sheer frustration, put five .50 caliber machine gun rounds into the wing of a P-47 flown by Charles J. Cameron during a mock combat training mission.

The Group never went into combat with their P-47s and produced no aces. The 15th FG was re-equipped with North American P-51 Mustangs in late 1944 and flew these aircraft when it was finally shipped to Saipan in early 1945.

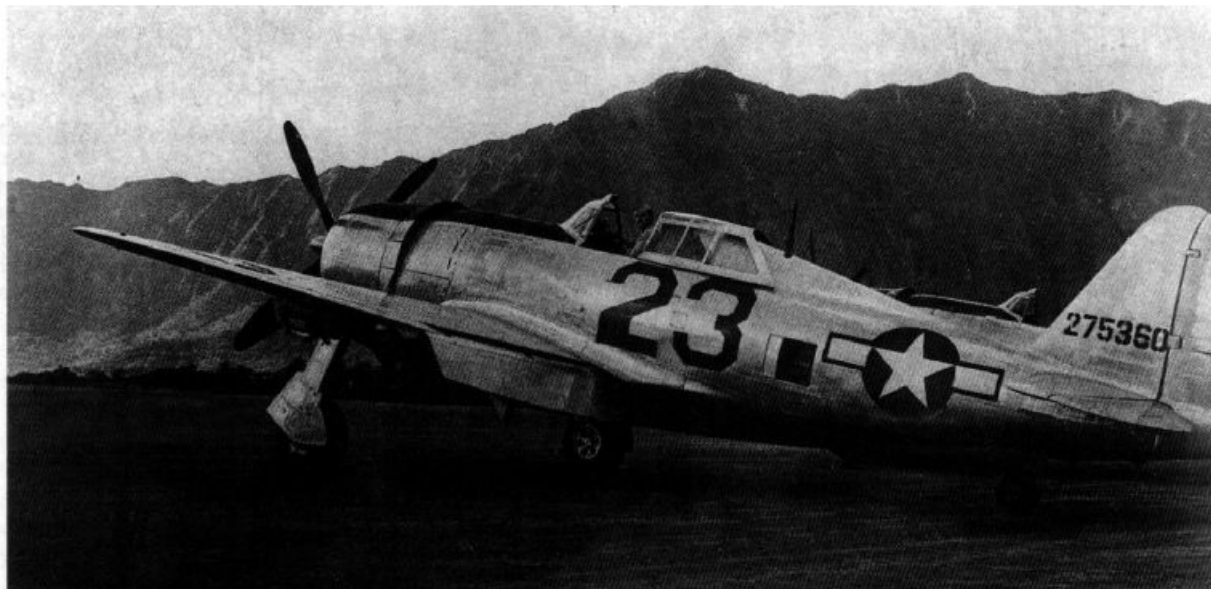
All of the 15th Fighter Group's P-47s are believed to have arrived in Hawaii in a natural metal finish. The majority of these fighters appear to be the early razorback P-47s and most wore an olive drab anti-gloss paint.

A 'Fat Cat' Flight — the Group commander and all three Squadron commanders — of the 15th Fighter Group cruises over deep blue Hawaiian waters during the late summer of 1944. The 15th FG never took their Jugs into combat. (Gilmer Snipes via John Lambert)

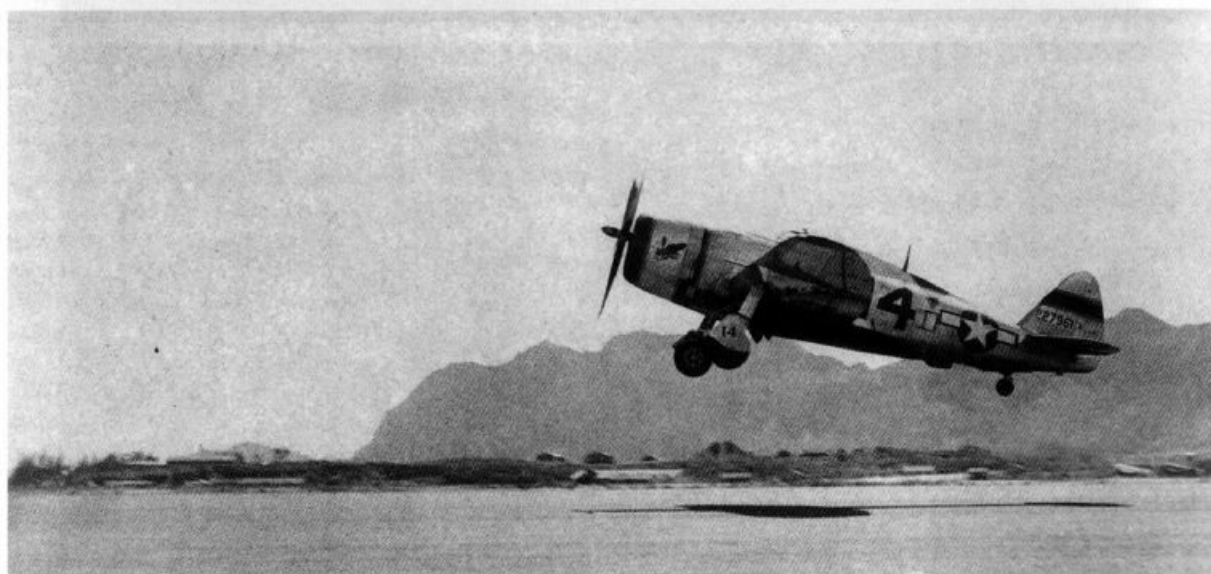


...on the forward fuselage in front of the windscreen. Each of the squadrons was assigned a squadron color — green for the 47th FS, black for the 47th FS, and yellow/black for the 78th FS. Most of the P-47s wore black identification bands around the tail surfaces and wings. These bands were often trimmed in the squadron colors. Black bands were also used on the cowlings. Other photos show the wing and tail surface tips painted in the squadron color and trimmed in black. Overall, the 15th Fighter Group's P-47s seem to have had a wide variety of markings. Each aircraft was also given a tactical number. This number was usually painted in a black stencil style on the fuselage between the cockpit and the supercharger intercooler outlet doors. The HQ Flight carried two digit numbers ranging from 01 to 99, the 46th FS carried two digit numbers from 51 to 99, the 47th FS wore three digit numbers from 001 to 999, and the 78th FS used three digit numbers ranging from 001 to 251.

(Below) Capt John Piper, commander of the 47th FS, 15th FG, flew this natural metal P-47D-23-RA (42-28066). The aircraft number '164' identifies the 47th FS, but the black markings appear to be edged in yellow — the combination of the 15th FG's 78th FS. (Gilmer Snipes via John Lambert)



(Above) The pilot of this P-47D-11-RE (42-75360) sits on cockpit alert. The aircraft number '23' indicates the aircraft is assigned to the HQ Flight of the 15th FG. No other Group or Squadron markings have been applied.



(Above) A P-47D-23-RE (42-27961) claws for altitude taking off from Bellows Field, Hawaii during the late summer of 1944. The aircraft number '14' has been repeated on the wheel well door. The number is slanted to be parallel with the ground while the aircraft is parked.





Lt Robert Scamara of the 47th 15th FG poses in front of a P-47D which is also wearing black and yellow striped cowlings. The Squadron insignia, 'The Turnip Termite', is painted on the cowling. (Robert Scamara via John Lambert)



(Left) A flight of 78th FS, 15th FG P-47Ds cruises off the coast of Hawaii during the late summer of 1944. The lead aircraft wears the squadron insignia, 'The Turnip Termite', on the black and yellow striped cowl. The 15th FG converted to P-51 Mustangs before moving to Saipan in early 1945. (James Vande Hyde via John Lambert)



(Below) This P-47D-23-RA (42-277) of the 78th FS, 15th FG was flown by Squadron Commander James Vande Hyde. The aircraft carries the Bushmaster squadron insignia on the black and yellow cowling. (James Vande Hyde via John Lambert)

The 318th Fighter Group's record of 153 victories against less than 10 losses makes it one of the premier P-47 Groups of World War 2. The group was originally constituted as the 318th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) on 2 February 1942. It was redesignated the 318th Fighter Group in May of 1942, but was not activated in Hawaii until the following summer. The 318th FG was assigned to the 7th Air Force and began training with Bell P-39 Airacobras and Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. The training consisted of the usual formation flying and combat tactics which eventually turning to what may have seemed like an endless series of operational combat air patrols off the coast of Hawaii. Initially the 318th FG was comprised of the 44th FS, 72nd FS, and the 73rd Fighter Squadrons. The 333rd FS replaced the 72nd FS in January of 1943 while the 44th FS was replaced by the 19th Fighter Squadron in March of 1943. (Late in the war the 545th Night Fighter Squadron's P-61 Black Widows were also attached to the 318th FG.) During November and December of 1943, the 318th began to receive the P-47 Thunderbolt. The first half of 1944 was spent conducting more training and by June the 318th FG was ready for war.

Since the 318th FG had gone into Saipan on D-Day plus 7, the island "flew, I've called you here today to tell you about a little cruise..."
The aircraft of the 318th FG are lined up at Bellows Field, Hawaii for final inspection before having their Jugs craned aboard two transport carriers and leaving for Saipan.

In mid-November of 1944 the 318th FG converted to the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. During the Group's approximately 6 months in combat, their P-47Ds had claimed only eight kills over Japanese aircraft. In April of 1945, the 318th traded in their P-38s for Republic's new P-47N. The P-47N was specifically designed for use in the Pacific and





The 318th FG was transported to Saipan on board two escort carriers: the USS *Natoma Bay* and *Manila Bay*. LIPPY IV, a P-47D-20-RA (43-25388) gets a final check while the task force nears the launch point.



Thunderbolts pack the flight deck of the USS *Natoma Bay*. Capt Harry E. McAfee prepares to lead his 19th FS Jugs off the deck. The 318th FG's Jugs wore both camouflage and natural metal schemes on their trip to the western Pacific.

Capt McAfee's Jug is successfully shot off the deck of the *Natoma Bay*. The remainder of the 318th Fighter Group followed in due course — the routine broken only by a brief attack by Japanese Val dive bombers.



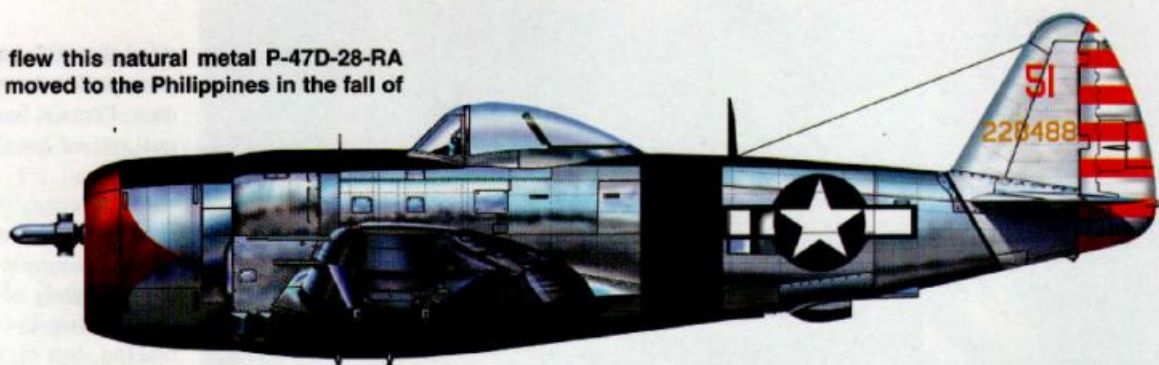
was the longest ranging variant of the Thunderbolt series. The P-47N had 18 plugs inserted into the wing roots which increased the wingspan from 40 feet 9 inches to 42 feet 6.75 inches. The wingspan did not increase by 36 inches because the wing tips clipped. The clipped tips gave the Thunderbolt's wings a more squared off appearance. The additional wing area was used to carry more fuel. Flying from bases in the Pacific the P-47N was able to escort USAAF heavy bombers to Japan and back. Group pilots sent back to Hawaii to ferry the new P-47N back to the front line. The pilots flew the 5000 miles from Hawaii to Ie Shima on the longest ferrying mission of single engine aircraft in the history of the USAAF. The 318th FG was now a mere 325 miles from Japan — a short minute flight. The extra fuel carried by the P-47N would allow the Thunderbolts more time over the target and more fuel to engage Japanese fighters patrolling the coast of the Japanese home islands. The first test was not long in coming.

On 25 May 1945 the 19th Fighter Squadron sent up a number of flights to patrol the western Pacific. During one of these flights Lts Richard Anderson and Donald E. Kennedy ambushed a formation of approximately 30 Mitsubishi Zeros near Amami O Shima. Although outnumbered, the two pilots took on the Japanese fighters and eight of the Zeros had been splashed within four minutes. Anderson claimed five kills and became an instant ace, while Kennedy took down three of the other three. Other flights that morning added 26 additional Japanese aircraft to the tally to bring the day's score up to 34 kills in a space of four hours. During the day's work the 318th FG expended 34,558 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition and burned 15,500 gallons of fuel.

Three days later on 28 May Capt John E. and his flight of four P-47Ns spotted 28 Zeros near Kanyo and immediately engaged them. Capt Vogt immediately flamed a "shiny black" Zero and quickly followed up with four more Zeros to become an instant ace. Lt Stanley J. Justice had bagged three Zeros on 25 May claiming another pair to also become an ace. The Group's P-47s racked up a score of 17 kills, four probable kills, and two damaged on this mission. Overall the 318th FG had destroyed 54 Japanese aircraft without loss to themselves during the five days of the Ryukyus-Kyushu operation.

The P-47N was also equipped to fire a variety of ground rockets. Up to five rockets could be mounted beneath each wing — two inboard and three outboard of the drop tank pylons. In June 1945 Capt Judge E. Wolfe became the first USAAF pilot to shoot down a Japanese aircraft (a Zero) with a pair of rockets. He followed this action up a few minutes later by blowing another Zero with another pair of rockets. Two more kills, occurring over Kyushu, made Wolfe an ace. However, the victories were not

The 40th FS, 35th FG, 5th AF flew this natural metal P-47D-28-RA (228488) just before the Group moved to the Philippines in the fall of 1944.



Lady Katy was a P-47D-16-RE (275927) assigned to the 9th FS, 49th FG, 5th AF.



"SLEEPY TIME GAL" — a popular Vargas pinup — was a P-47D-15-RA assigned to the 40th FS, 58th FG, 5th AF.

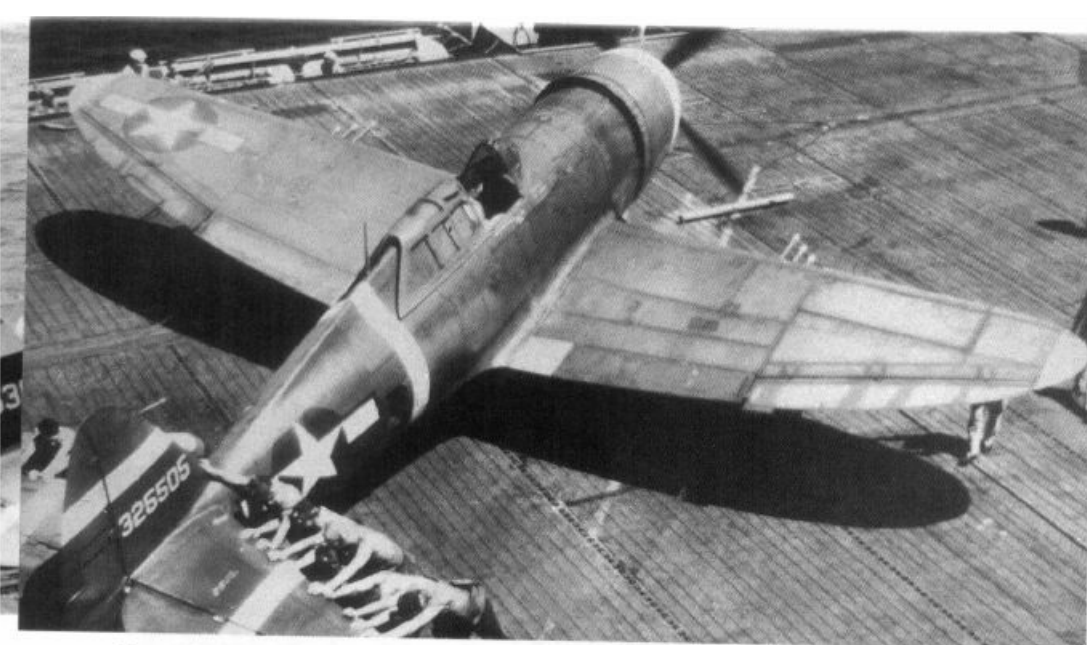


The 40th FS commander flew this P-47D-16-RE (42-10055) while part of the 58th FG, 5th AF.



The P-47's guns were boresighted by lifting the tail. The job required a crane of eight — plus the inevitable kibitzers. (J. Weir via Norris Graser)





Navy deck crews bend their backs to get the big Jug into position for take off. The Thunderbolt was a handful compared to the lighter F6F Hellcat. This Thunderbolt is already suffering the effects of weathering from its voyage.



One by one, the P-47s are brought forward to the catapult. The catapult bridle rests on the deck in the foreground.

Once in position, the crews attach the catapult bridle to the Thunderbolt's landing gear struts and the holdback bar to the tail wheel.



sided that day. Lt Irving Albert was lost when attempted to bounce a Zero that was flying on deck. Perhaps fixated on his target, Albert did pull out of his dive in time and went into ground.

On 10 June 1945 35 P-47s were escorting Navy PB4Y Liberators on a photographic reconnaissance mission when the formation ran into approximately 130 Japanese aircraft. The bulk of the escorting P-47s stayed with the Liberators, but eight Jugs were sent to keep the Japanese fighters off guard. These eight Thunderbolts shot down 17 Japanese fighters north of Kago Shima Wan, a large bay on the southern end of Kyushu. Lt Robert J. Stone of the 333rd Fighter Squadron bagged a pair of Zeros and then went after a lone Kawasaki Ki-44 George. Stone suddenly found himself the center of attention of about two dozen agitated Japanese fighter pilots with one pair of Zeros rapidly closing on his tail. Stone's engine was not quite producing full power, so he dived for the deck and roared across the countryside and on to Nittagahara Air Field only a few feet off the ground. When Stone observed a Mitsubishi G4M Betty bomber taking off directly in front of him, he broke hard to the left to avoid hitting it. The two pursuers, believed caught in his propwash, then collided. The two out-of-control Japanese fighters then crashed into the now airborne Betty. These three kills, later confirmed by a reconnaissance photo, created another instant ace.

Major John J. Hussey, the commander of the 73rd FS downed a pair of Japanese aircraft on 1 July to be credited with the 318th Fighter Group's 100th victory in 18 days. Eleven days later, Lt. William N. Mathis brought down two Zeros over Kikai Shima to become the Group's last ace of the war. The Group was credited with a total of 153 victories while flying the Thunderbolt with 148 being credited to the P-47N. The Group's aces included Capt J. Wolfe of the 333rd FS with nine, followed by five pilots of the 19th FS — Lt S. Justic with seven, Capt J. E. Vogt with five, and Lts W. Mathis, R. H. Anderson, and R. Stone with five each.

The 318th Fighter Group Jugs catapulted from the USS *Natoma Bay* and *Manila Bay* wore the standard USAAF camouflage scheme of olive drab upper surfaces over neutral gray under surfaces. The 19th Fighter Squadron removed the olive drab paint from their cowlings and tail surfaces and applied a light blue horizontal band across the natural metal fin and rudder. A single 21-inch white letter was carried on the fuselage aft of the cockpit. The 73rd FS used a white 12-inch cowl ring band, a 12-inch wide fuselage band, and 10-inch bands on the tail surfaces. The 73rd FS used fuselage numbers from 1 to 30. The 333rd FS carried the same marking bands as the 73rd FS, but in yellow. The squadrons also carried their squadron colors on many of the Thunderbolts — blue for the 19th FS, white for the 73rd FS, and yellow for the 333rd FS. The squadron colors were often painted on the wing tips.

The P-47Ns received in April of 1945 arrived with a natural metal finish. The 19th FS carried a blue fin and horizontal tail plane tips. Aircraft numbers from 01 to 37 were carried in black on the blue fin tip. Many 19th FS Jugs also carried a blue cowl ring and cowl flaps painted in black. The 73rd FS wore black fin and tail plane tips and carried a natural metal finish on the black fin tip. These numbers also went from 01 to 37. The 73rd is not believed to have worn the squadron colors on their engine nacelles at this time. The 333rd FS wore their own squadron colors in a manner similar to the other two squadrons in the Group, however, the 333rd FS did not carry any individual aircraft numbers on the vertical fins.

In June of 1945, the 318th Fighter Group carried yellow and black stripes on the horizontal and vertical tail surfaces as a Group marking. Individual squadron colors continued to be worn on the cowl rings including those of the 19th FS Jugs. The Group marking also forced a modification of the aircraft numbers to the fuselages. The 333rd FS carried 01 through 39, while both the 19th and 73rd FSs wore the numbers 40 through 80 — all in black. Many aircraft also showed the aircraft number repeated on the cowling covers.

THE 508th FIGHTER GROUP

The 508th Fighter Group was created on 5 November 1943 and assigned personnel at Hamilton Field, Colorado on 12 October 1943. It was under the command of Col Henry G. Henshaw, Jr. After training with the P-47N, the group moved to Hawaii in January of 1945 to serve as a part of the 7th Air Force's Hawaiian Island Defense. The 508th FG, consisting of the 467th and 468th Fighter Squadrons, served as a training unit and provided replacement pilots for combat groups on the front lines. The Group also ferried new aircraft to combat replacement depots. The 508th Fighter Group never got into combat and had no victories. It was deactivated at Bellows Field, Hawaii on 25 November 1945. The war was over and it was time to go home.

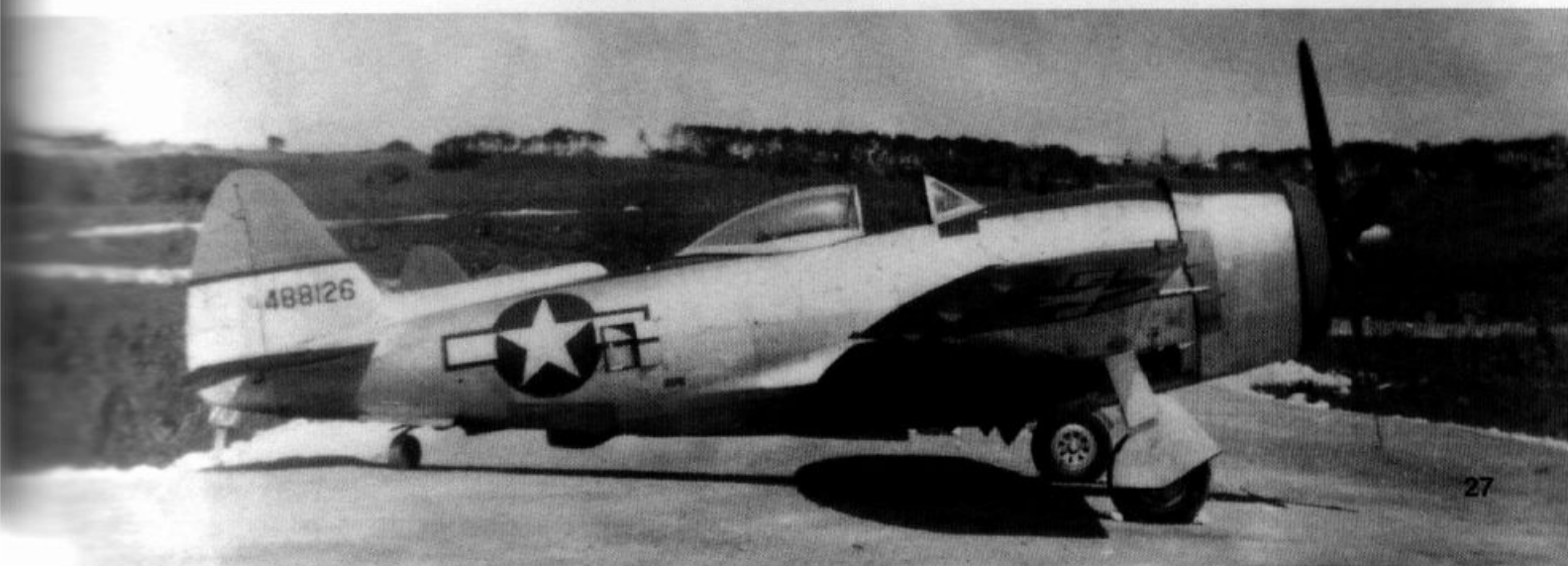


Once hooked up, the slack in the bridle is taken up, the engine brought up to full power, and the Thunderbolt is shot into the air. US Navy deck crews were no stranger to the roar of the 18-cylinder P&W R-2800 engine — it also powered the Grumman F6F Hellcat and Vought F4U Corsair.



The 19th FS, 318th FG carried the aircraft ID in the form of a single letter on the fuselage side. This may be a replacement aircraft since the letter 'M' looks like it has been painted over an older three digit number. The fuselage side provided ample space for large pinup artwork.

A brand new P-47N-1-RE (44-88126) rests on the ramp at Ie Shima in 1945. The Jug wears the light blue cowl ring and tail fin tip of the 19th FS, but has not yet had the aircraft number applied to the fuselage. Approximately 550 P-47N-1-REs were built before production switched to the 'Dash 5' model. (Mason Barnett via James Lansdale)





DARING DOTTIE III, a P-47D-2-RE (222637) was assigned to the 348th FS, 348th FG, 5th AF, Moresby, New Guinea in 1943.

Lt Col Robert R. Rowland flew this P-47D-2-RE (28096) while commanding the 348th FG.



Inner surface of both wheel hubs



Miss Lorraine was a P-47D-23-RA (227886) assigned to the 341st FS, 248th FG, 5th AF.

Miss Lorraine



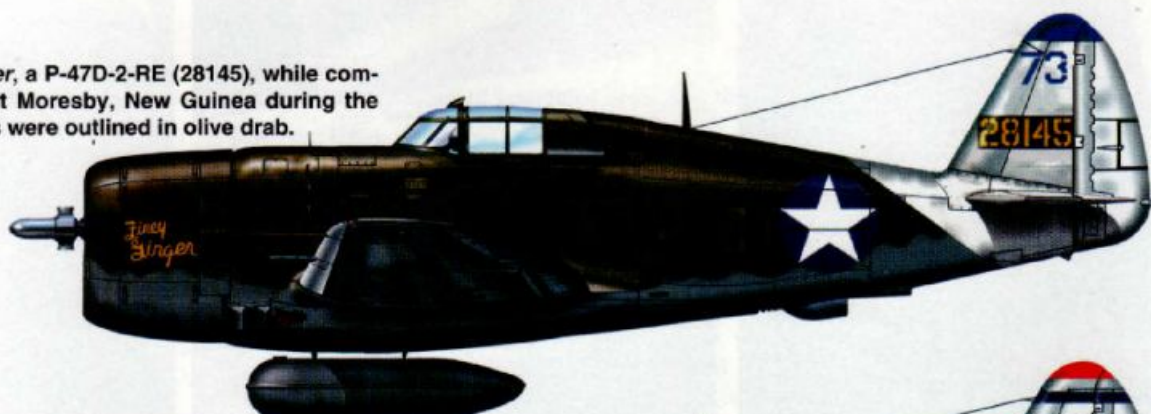
This early P-47D-2-RE (28054) of the 342nd FS, 348th FG wears the early style US insignia seen in early 1943. The aft trim tabs were outlined in olive drab.



This P-47N-1-RE wears the blue fin tip, cowl flaps, cowl ring, and spinner of the 19th FS. The 19th FS insignia is painted below the windscreen and the pilot's personal nose art is painted on the cowl.

Two 165 gallon drop tanks are mounted under the wings, while a 300 gallon drop tank is mounted under the fuselage. (Norris G. Collection)

Paul New Kearby flew *Firey Ginger*, a P-47D-2-RE (28145), while commanding the 348th FG near Port Moresby, New Guinea during the summer of 1943. The rear trim tabs were outlined in olive drab.



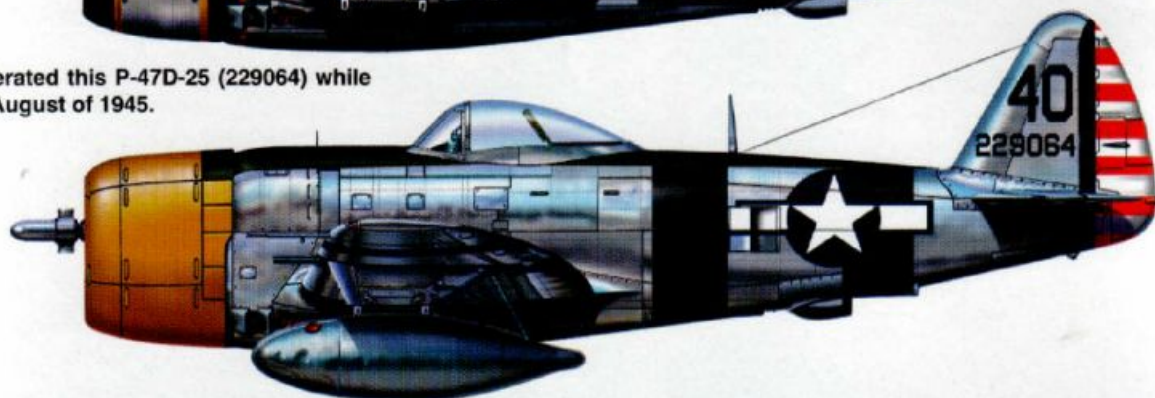
Kearby later flew *Firey Ginger IV*, a P-47D-4-RE (222668) which achieved his final score of 22 kills.



The P-47D-23-RA (228066) of the 47th FS, 15th FG, 7th AF was assigned to the defense of the Hawaiian Islands.



The 47th FS, 35th FG, 7th AF operated this P-47D-25 (229064) while based at Naha Field, Okinawa in August of 1945.



The P-47D-23-RE of the 311th FS, 58th FG cruises over the Philippines. The Jug wears markings introduced in January of 1945 after the

Group had moved out of the Southwest Pacific Area and into the Philippine Archipelago.





The 73rd FS was known collectively as the 'Bar Flies'. The squadron insignia — a bomb and beer toting cartoon character — was painted on most of the Squadron's aircraft. Some pilots also added names around the insignia. (Kenn C. Rust)



Other pilots, such as Lt Yaeger, preferred to paint the insignia on the fuselage side. This left room for...



...other forms of self-expression on the WICKED "WEE" III had her nose art emblem on her cowl. The wide expanse of the fuselage and cowl provided ample space for official and not-so-official art.



(Above) A summer rain storm wet down the 73rd FS dispersal area on Saipan in July of 1944. The vertical white band on the rear fuselage was part of the 73rd FS markings scheme. The aircraft number '33' is believed to be painted in yellow.

(Below) P-47Ns of the 333rd FS, 318th FG line up on the ramp at Shima in August of 1945. 2 BIG And Too HEAVY was a P-47N and wore a yellow cowl ring trimmed in black and a black and yellow striped tail. The tail markings covered the serial number.



THE 10th AIR FORCE

The 10th Air Force was created on 4 February 1942 at Patterson Field, Ohio. The 10th AF's formal activation followed on 12 February. The 10th AF received orders to move to India on 8 March 1942. The deployment was completed by 16 May when the last unit arrived in New Delhi. The 10th AF served in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater until the 14th Air Force was activated in China in March of 1943. The 10th AF continued to operate in Burma and India until it moved into Japan in July of 1945 for the final assault on the Japanese home islands. Two P-47 groups were assigned to the 10th Air Force — the 33rd and 40th Fighter Groups.

Colonel H. A. Halverson was the first — and interim — commander of the 10th AF until he was relieved by Major General Louis. H. Brereton. Brereton was, in turn, replaced by Brigadier General E. L. Naiden, followed by Maj Gen Clayton A. Bissell, Maj Gen H. C. Davidson, and Maj Gen A. F. Hegenburger.

The 10th AF and its subordinate units took part in the Burma, India-China, Chinese Defense, Central Burma, and China Offensive campaigns. The 10th AF returned to the United States in December of 1945 and was deactivated on 6 January 1946.

THE AIR COMMANDO GROUP

The ground campaign in Burma during much of 1943 was often characterized by small scale attacks and counterattacks by both the Allies and the Japanese. In early 1944, Japanese movements were in sufficient strength to warrant the attention of the Allied HQ Staff. In order to disrupt the Japanese and relieve some of the pressure on the lines, British General Orde Wingate and his special operations force, known as the Chindits, were dropped behind Japanese lines. The Chindits were skilled with conducting large scale commando operations, disrupting Japanese lines of communication, and threatening their supply dumps and airfields. Such operations, if they were to be successful, would require dedicated air support. In late January of 1944 a number of 10th AF fighter, bomber, cargo, and liaison units were placed under the command of Col Philip G. Cochran and designated the 5318th Air Unit. The following month, the combined force was redesignated the 1st Air Commando Force (1st ACF).

The 1st ACF was divided into three sub-units — assault, transport, and liaison. The assault unit was composed of North American P-51A Mustangs and B-25G/H gunships. The transport arm was composed of Douglas C-47 cargo aircraft and a large number of transport and assault gliders. The liaison arm consisted of light L-1 and L-5 observation/medevac aircraft. The result was a highly mobile, self-contained flying unit. **FLYING ABORTION, a P-47D-23-RA (42-27773) of the 5th Fighter Squadron, 1st Air Commando Group, rests on the flightline at Lungshan Aerodrome in Shanghai. A Direction Finding (DF) loop has been mounted on the fuselage spine. (P.M. Bowers)**

tained combined arms unit that was similar in concept to the modern USAF Composite Wing.

The 1st Air Commando Force immediately began conducting close support and resupply operations to the Chindits behind Japanese lines and conducted these operations throughout the months of February and March of 1944. The 1st ACF operations were sufficiently successful to warrant an expansion of their role and the scope of their operations throughout northern and central Burma. On 29 March 1944 the 1st ACF was redesignated the 1st Air Commando Group. During early May of 1944 the Japanese launched operation 'U-Go' — a major offensive designed to push the Allies completely out of Burma, isolate China, and drive into India.

The 1st ACG also went on the offensive. Throughout the spring and summer of 1944 the Group conducted a seemingly endless series of close support and air interdiction missions. These were not only designed to hit the Japanese on the front lines, but also to isolate the battlefield from Japanese resupply efforts. The 1st ACG's efforts were largely successful and the Group and other 10th AF units were able to operate almost completely unhindered by Japanese aerial opposition. When the Japanese U-Go operation wavered and finally fell back, the Allies, growing stronger on a daily basis, followed close behind. The 1st ACG was reinforced in the late summer of 1944 with two additional squadrons — the 5th Fighter Squadron (Commando) and the 6th Fighter Squadron (Commando) — both equipped with the ground pounding P-47 Thunderbolt.

The 5th and 6th FS(C) mission remained much as it was for all other Thunderbolt units in the CBI — ground attack. Japanese road and rail bridges, supply dumps, artillery positions, airfields, and other installations were all prime targets for the Squadrons' Jugs. The ground attack mission and lack of fighter opposition also meant there was little, if any, real opportunity for the 5th and 6th FS(C) to engage Japanese aircraft. Neither of the Squadrons are believed to have produced any aces during their operation of the Thunderbolt. Both Squadrons re-equipped with the P-51D Mustang in early 1945.

All 1st ACG Thunderbolts are believed to have been used in a natural metal finish. The aircraft carried the standard US star-and-bar insignia in four positions (both sides of the fuselage, port upper and starboard lower wings) and usually had the aircraft serial numbers painted in black on the vertical fin. All 1st ACG Jugs carried **five dark blue diagonal stripes** on the aft fuselage as a Group marking, although some aircraft did fly a few early missions without them. This design, a carryover from earlier aircraft, was instantly recognizable to friend and foe, whether in the air or on the ground. Black aircraft numbers were worn on the fuselage sides below the cockpit, while black theater ID bands were added to the cowl ring, wings, and tail surfaces. Many Thunderbolts also had the aircraft number repeated in white on the tail fin band.





A P-47D-25-RA of the 31st Fighter Group prepares launching from a US Navy escort carrier off Saipan in 1944. The pilot has yet to drop the flaps to take position.

LITTLE JOE was a P-47N-1-RE (487946) assigned to the 73rd FS, 318th FG during the summer of 1945.



LIPPY IV, a P-47D-20-RA (325388) of the 333rd FS, 318th FG was one of several P-47s launched from a pair of escort carriers off Saipan in 1944.



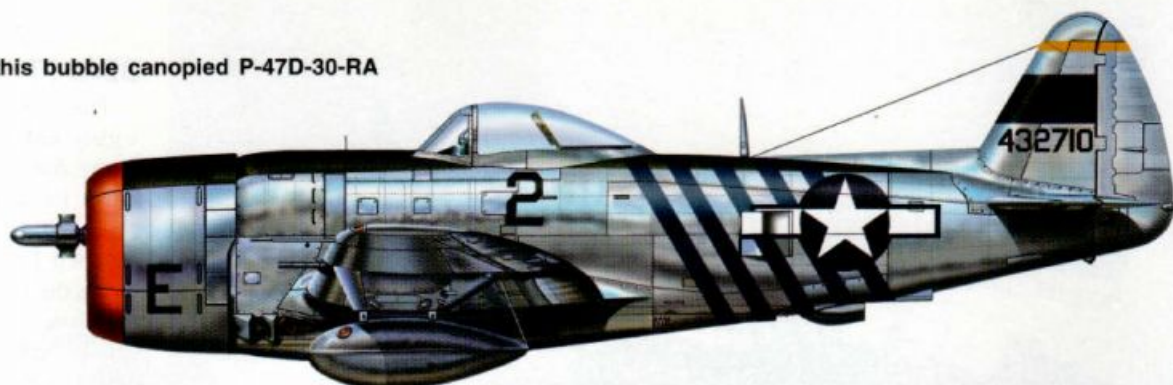
THE FLYING ABORTION, a P-47D-23-RA (227773) of the 5th FS, wears the distinctive blue diagonal stripes of the 1st Air Commando Group.



This razorback P-47D carries the forward slanted tail band of the 91st FS, 81st FG at Kwanghan, China. The aircraft number 902 was painted in white on the fuselage side.



88th FS, 1st ACG also flew this bubble canopied P-47D-30-RA



Carletta was a P-47D-21-RE (225346) assigned to the 88th FS, 80th FS, 80th AF in India in 1945.



Frankie's TURBO/Millie was a P-47D-23-RA (325708) assigned to the 89th FS, 80th FG in China.



Mike was a P-47D-23-RA (325730) assigned to the 91st FS, 81st FS, 81st AF. Most China and India based Jugs were equipped with a Direction Finding (DF) loop.



My Little Gem was assigned to the 91st FS, 81st FG. Gem was a P-47D-23-RA and was used primarily in the ground attack role.





The 1st ACG received the new P-47D-30-RA before converting to North American P-51D Mustangs in early 1945. This natural metal Jug lacks the usual DF loop on the fuselage spine. (P.M. Bowers)



A P-47D-11-RE of the 5th FS, 1st ACG roars off the runway carrying a pair of P-38 style drop tanks. These tanks were popular among Thunderbolt units since they offered an increase in fuel over the standard 75 gallon tanks. The Jug wears a black '3' on the fuselage, but carries a white '71' on the black tail band.

This P-47D-30-RA is equipped with a DF loop for operations over the inhospitable terrain of northern Burma and southern China. The five dark blue fuselage stripes of the 1st ACG were instantly recognizable to friend and foe alike.



33rd FIGHTER GROUP

The 33rd Fighter Group was one of the most widely traveled Fighter Groups in the entire Army Air Force. The Group started out as the 33rd Pursuit Group (Interceptor) on November 1940 and was formally activated at Mitchell Field, New York on 15 January 1941 flying the Bell P-39 Airacobra. In May of 1941 the Group was redesignated the 33rd Fighter Group. After a period of training in the US the 33rd FG moved to North Africa with its subordinate squadrons (the 58th, 59th, and 60th Fighter Squadrons) on 8 November 1942. The 33rd FG became a part of the 12th Air Force and operated Curtiss P-40 Warhawks in France, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy. The Group then moved to India in February of 1943 to join the 10th Air Force and convert to the P-47 Thunderbolt. The stay in India was brief — not enough to become familiar with the Jug — so the 33rd FG transferred to the 14th AF in China. This was the Group's third different Air Force as well as its third different continent. After a short period in China the 33rd FG was transferred back to India and the 10th AF. The 33rd Fighter Group ultimately ended up in Burma flying drop bombing and strafing missions. The 33rd FG converted to the Lockheed P-38 Lightning in November of 1944 and January/February 1945. At the end of the war the Group was returned to the US and was deactivated on December 1945 — four years and one day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The 33rd FG had a number of outstanding commanding officers — among them Col Elwood R. Quesada, Col William W. 'Spooky' Momyer (who became an ace), Col Loring Stetson, Jr., and Lt Col Oliver G. Cellini. The 33rd Fighter Group scored 122 victories over the course of its combat career, but none of these were achieved with the P-47. This was primarily due to their mission of ground attack and the lack of aerial opposition while fighting in China and Burma.

P-47s assigned to the 33rd FG were camouflaged in olive drab upper surfaces over neutral gray under surfaces. Some later razorback Jugs were seen in a natural metal finish with olive drab anti-glare panels on the upper fuselage in front of the windscreen. White cowl rings and wing and tail bands were worn as theater recognition markings on the olive drab aircraft, while black was used on the natural metal Jugs. Aircraft numbers in the 800 range were painted in white on the olive drab Thunderbolts. Natural metal P-47s usually wore a black two digit number. Most of the Group's P-47s carried a direction finding (DF) loop aerial on the fuselage spine aft of the cockpit.



(Above) Lady Esther and two cohorts of the 33rd Fighter Group taxi after a mission at Piardoba, India. The 33rd FG operated three fighter squadrons — the 58th, 59th and 60th FS and spent time with the 10th and 14th AFs in the China-Burma-India Theater. (J.V.)

(Below) A flight of Thunderbolts peels off to land while a pair of Jugs sit on the flightline at Pungchuacheng, China on 14 August 1944. The pristine Thunderbolt in the foreground, a P-47D-15-RA (42-23194) of the 60th FS, 33rd FG, is in the process of having her nose art painted on the cowling. (USAF)



Yellow tails and blue hearts were the hallmark of the 21st FS, 413th FG, 20th AF. BR was a P-47N-1-RE.



BABY DUMPLING was one of the few P-47N-5-REs (488366) to make it to the western Pacific before the war ended. The long range Jug was assigned to the 437th FS, 414th FG, 20th AF.



LADY LEOTA was a P-47N-1-RE assigned to the 437th FS, 414th FG on Iwo Jima during the summer of 1945.



The SHELL PUSHER was a P-47N-1-RE assigned to the 463rd FS, 507th FG, 20th AF during the summer of 1945.



Yellow and blue-tailed P-47NS of the 414th FG were parked at North Field, Iwo Jima during the summer of 1945. The yellow-tailed Jugs are assigned to the 413th FG while the blue-tailed Thunderbolts are part of the 456th FS. (Author)



Thunderbolt II (KJ302) of No. 42 Sqdn, RAF SEAC had its serial
 painted in smaller characters on the vertical fin. The southeast
 climate played havoc with aircraft paint finishes.



Flying Officer N.G. Salter of No. 134 Sqdn flew ELAINE II, a
 Thunderbolt II (HD196), from Arakan and Ramree Island from
 September of 1944 to April of 1945.



Salter later flew this natural metal Thunderbolt II (KL339) from
 Ramree Island in May and June of 1945.



No. 135 Sqdn, RAF SEAC, flew this Thunderbolt I (HB975) out of
 Akyab and Akyab, Burma from late 1944 to the summer of 1945.



Camouflage Markers



Thunderbolt I (FL807) was assigned to No. 258 Squadron, RAF
 Southeast Asia Command in the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater during the 1944.
 Checkered cowl ring was short-lived and gave way to a white ID ring.



THE 80th FIGHTER GROUP

The 80th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) was formed on 13 January 1942 and manned at Selfridge Field, Michigan under the command of Colonel John C. Crosthwaite on 9 February 1942. It was redesignated the 80th Fighter Group in May of 1942. Major Albert L. Evans, Jr. replaced Col Crosthwaite as commander on 1 July 1943. The Group consisted of the 88th, 89th, and 90th Fighter Squadrons. A fourth squadron — the 459th FS — was added in 1943, but it never flew the P-47. The Group trained on the P-47 at Farmingdale, New York before sailing to India in May of 1943 to join the 10th Air Force. Combat operations began in September of 1943 with the Group flying P-38 Lightnings and P-40 Warhawks. The 80th FG converted back to the P-47 during 1944 and operated out of Myitkyina, Burma. The Group also operated a number of small detachments — culled from the three fighter squadrons — throughout Burma and India during the course of the war. Major Evans, who had been replaced by Col Ivan McElroy, returned as a Colonel on 13 April 1944 to assume command and headed the Group until 1 February 1945.

The primary mission of the 80th FG was ground attack, consequently the opportunity to engage Japanese aircraft were few and far between.

The only victories scored with the P-47 occurred on 14 December 1944 when the 90th Fighter Squadron claimed four kills. 1Lt Samuel Hammer aced out with a triple kill and 2Lt Steadman L. Howland claimed another. All four Japanese aircraft were Kawasaki Ki-44 fighters.

The P-47 Thunderbolts of the 80th FG operated in both olive drab and natural metal finishes. White theater identification bands were applied to camouflaged fighters, while the natural metal Jugs wore black bands. Each of the fighter squadrons was also assigned a squadron color: white for the 88th FS, red for the 89th FS, and blue for the 90th FS. These colors were usually applied to the cowl rings. The aircraft were also assigned individual aircraft numbers — 1-9 for the Headquarters Flight, 10-39 for the 88th FS, 40-69 for the 89th FS, and 70-99 for the 90th FS. The numbers were 22 inches high and painted in white on camouflaged Thunderbolts and black on the natural metal Jugs. Additionally, the 88th carried the number in black on their white cowl rings. Many of the 80th FG's Jugs were also equipped with a DF band on the fuselage spine behind the cockpit.



(Above) A P-47D-23-RA of the 88th FS, 80th FG taxis forward at Tinghawk Sakan, Burma under the watchful eye of the crew chief sitting on the port wing. Another pair of eyes was always helpful when taxiing the great bulk of the Thunderbolt. No Group or Squadron markings have been applied. (R. C. Jones)

(Below) *Carlotta* was a weathered P-47D-21-RE assigned to the 88th FS, 80th FG at Barrackpore, India in March of 1945. An olive drab Jug at this stage of the war was rare — most 80th FG P-47s were natural metal. (P.M. Bowers)





This natural metal P-47D-23-RA (43-25708), assigned to the 89th FS, 89th FG, was named *Frankie's TURBO* on the cowl and *Millie* under the windscreen. The squadron insignia, a skull with lightning bolts emanating from the eye sockets superimposed on flaming clouds with a spade, was painted under the cockpit sill. (P.M. Bowers)

The 89th FS, 89th FG flew this P-47D-23-RA (42-27425) out of Myitkyina, Burma. The aircraft number 80 is repeated in white on the cowl ring. (J.V. Crow)



A P-47D-23-RA (42-27470) of the 90th FS, 80th FG glistens in the sun at Tinghawk, Burma in September of 1944. The Thunderbolt sports black ID bands on the wings and tail surfaces, an olive drab



Sweet Dorene was a P-47D-23-RA (42-27555) assigned to the 89th FS, 80th FG at Myitkyina, Burma. The Jug wears the black aircraft number 45 shaded in red. The cowl ring is also red, while the tail and wing bands are black. (J. V. Crow)

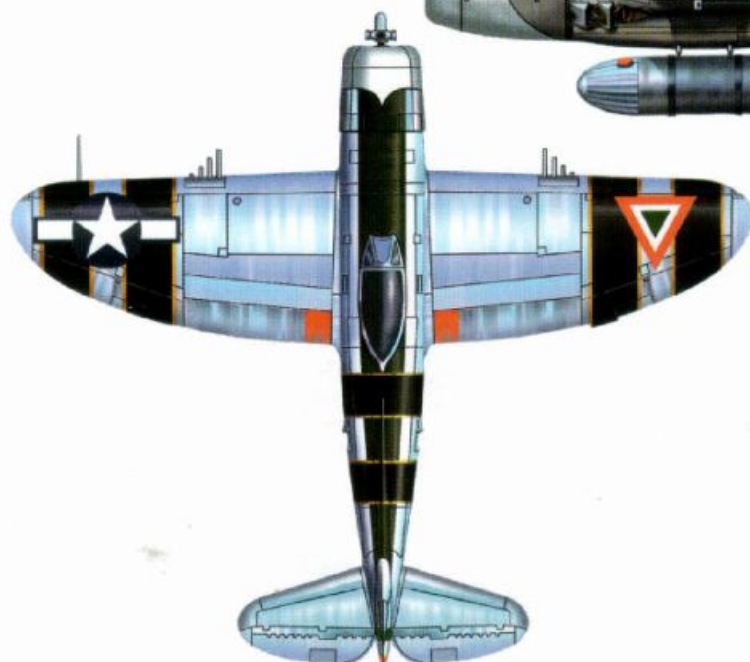
A 90th FS P-47D-23-RA rumbles out to the runway at Tinghawk, Burma in July of 1944. The Jug is armed with a pair of 250 pound bombs under the wings. (K.M. Sumney via P. M. Bowers)



anti-glare panel, and a blue cowl ring. This Jug was named *Blunder Bus*.



LADY MAURENE was a P-47D-28 (or later) that was reassigned to the Nationalist Chinese Air Force. The Nationalist's P-47s were used during the Chinese Civil War which broke out after WW II.



The Mexican Air Force operated a single squadron of P-47s in the Pacific. This P-47D-30-RA (44-337737) was assigned to the 20th Escuadron Aereo de Pelea which was attached to the USAAF 5th FG in the Philippines.

The Mexican AF insignia was carried opposite the US insignia both upper and lower wings. Vertical green, white, and red stripes were carried on the rudder.

The 81st FG turned over many of their Thunderbolts to the Nationalist Chinese Air Force after the war. The ex-91st FS P-47D-30-RA (44-32734) in the foreground has had blue and white

stripes painted on the rudder and the Chinese AF insignia applied over the painted out US insignia on the fuselage side. (Larry Davis)



THE 14th AIR FORCE

The 14th Air Force was activated at Kunming, China on 10 March 1943 following its authorization five days earlier. The 14th AF was formed using the personnel and equipment of the China-Air Task Force, a subordinate unit of the 10th AF based in India. The 14th AF was created in order to consolidate USAAF assets into a single command and to serve the needs of the US and Chinese forces fighting the Japanese in China and northern Burma. It was in combat against the Japanese while operating from Kunming, China and later moving to Hsinan, China. Major General Claire L. Chennault, the former commander of the American Volunteer Group (AVG, or Flying Tigers) was commander until he was replaced by Major General C. B. Stone III on 1 August 1945. The 10th AF possessed two P-47 Fighter Groups — the 33rd FG and 81st FG. The 33rd Fighter Group was initially part of the 10th Air Force and served with the 14th AF during the summer of 1944 before returning to the 10th. The 81st FG came to China from the 12th Air Force. Col Oliver G. Cellini, commander of the 81st FG, had originally been commander of the 33rd FG, but had been replaced by Col David D. Terry, Jr. as CO of the 33rd FG. The 14th AF operated in China until the end of the war and served in the India-Burma, Chinese Defensive and China Offensive Campaigns. It was deactivated on 6 January 1946.

THE 81st FIGHTER GROUP

The 81st Fighter Group was originally formed as the 81st Pursuit Group (Interceptor) at Morris Field, North Carolina on 13 January 1942. The Group's initial cadre of personnel was assigned on 9 February 1942. The Group was redesignated the 81st Fighter Group in May of 1942. The 81st FG and its three subordinate fighter squadrons (the 91st FS, 92nd FS, and 93rd FS) were moved overseas to North Africa in June of 1942. The demands on transport were so great due to OPER-

Jewel, flown by Col Fred Hook of the 91st FS, 81st FG, carries fragmentation bombs under the wings. The P-47D-23-RA (42-3331) was named for Col Hook's wife and was parked at Hsian, China. (J.V. Crow)

ATION TORCH — the Allied invasion of North Africa — that the move lasted until February of 1943. Assigned to the 12th AF, the 81st FG began combat operations in January of 1943 before much of the Group was in place. The squadrons of the 81st FG were equipped with a mixed assortment of Bell P-39 Airacobras, Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, and Curtiss P-40 Warhawks while operating in North Africa.

The 81st FG received orders to move to India in February and March of 1944. The Group was re-equipped with the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt and, following familiarization training, was moved into China to join the 14th AF. Moving from the hot, dry desert of North Africa to the equally hot, but humid climate of northern India and southern China was quite a change. The Group Headquarters was located at Kwanghan while the fighter squadrons were either with the Group HQ or at dispersal fields around the area.

The 81st Fighter Group began operations when the 92nd Fighter Squadron went into combat on 1 June 1944. The 91st FS followed on 16 June and the 93rd FS on 11 July. The 93rd FS only remained in combat for three months before it was recalled to Gushkara, India in October of 1944. The 93rd FS was then tasked with providing combat training for the Group and the remaining two Squadrons. The 93rd FS remained in this role for nine months.

The 81st FG returned to full combat duty in January of 1945, attacking Japanese air fields and other fixed installations and flying bomber escort missions. The 81st Fighter Group was also tasked with supporting the Chinese ground forces by attacking Japanese troop concentrations, supply dumps, lines of communication, and targets of opportunity. These air attacks further hindered Japanese attempts to resupply their ground forces. The 81st FG was deactivated in China on 27 December 1945.

The 81st Fighter Group accounted for six victories while flying the P-47 — the 91st FS had four, while the 92nd FS had two. The 93rd FS had no kills owing to its short time in combat and subsequent training role. The Group's top scorer was 1Lt Phillip M. Van Sickle of the 91st FS with a pair of victories. Van Sickle's last kill with the P-47 came on 17 January 1945 when he flamed a Kawasaki Ki-61 Tony. He damaged a Ki-43 Oscar on the same mission.

The 81st Fighter Group's first batch of P-47Ds arrived in olive drab



and neutral gray camouflage schemes. Later Jugs were received in a natural metal finish. The camouflaged Thunderbolts wore a white aircraft code letter on the fuselage and a white band on the fin and rudder. The **91st Fighter Squadron** used numbers in the **900 to 930** range, the **92nd FS** carried **931 through 950**, and the **93rd FS** was allotted **951 through 975**. The **91st FS** used a **white diagonal band** on the fin and rudder running from the upper forward portion of the fin to the lower rear portion of the rudder. The **92nd FS** had a **vertical white band** on the fin,

usually placed just forward of the rudder hinge line. The **93rd FS** had a **white band** on the fin *running opposite that of the 91st FS*. All squadrons carried white cowl rings. On the later natural metal P-47s, the same markings were applied, however, these were painted black as were the numbers and cowl rings. Many natural metal Jugs also carried black wing tips. Additionally, most of the natural metal P-47s carried black chordwise bands on the wings. These bands were usually centered on the wing guns.



My Little Gem, a P-47D-23-RA (42-27393) of the 91st FS, 81st FG, is towed across the flightline while loaded with fragmentation bombs. It is not known if the *My Little Gem* refers to the Thunderbolt or the

pilot's wife/girl friend — although the Jug would hardly be considered 'little'.



(Above) A pair of Thunderbolts assigned to the 91st FS, 81st FG, are parked in front of a hangar at a field in southern China. The natural metal Jug is a P-47D-30-RA. Both P-47s are equipped with DF loops on the fuselage spine and feature the standard ID bands for camouflaged and natural metal Jugs operating in the CBI. (L. Davis)

(Below) The pilot and crew chief run through a pre-flight check of this P-47D-30-RA of the 81st FG. The forward slanting tail band and an aircraft number in the 900 to 930 range were indicative of the Group's 91st FS. (Larry Davis)



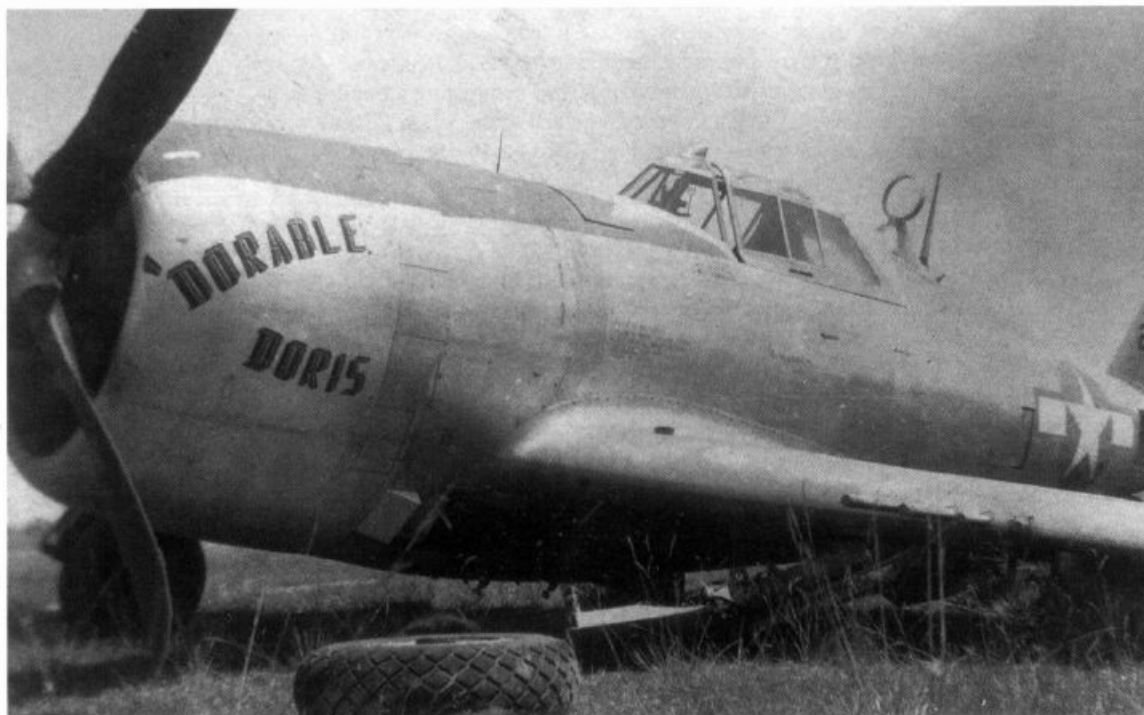


"Mike" was a P-47D-5-RA assigned to the 464th FS, 507th FG while the Group was in China as part of the 7th AF. The Jug is armed with fragmentation cluster bombs on the wing pylons and a 110 gallon fuel tank. For some reason, "Mike" is shod with tires having two different tread styles. (Larry Davis)



(Above) Ground crews attend to the turbosupercharger intake ducting on this P-47D-30-RA assigned to the 91st FS, 81st FG. The 81st FG was assigned to the 14th AF in China where it operated in the ground attack role against Japanese forces in northern Burma and southern China in 1944 and 1945. (George McKay)

(Right) "DORABLE DORIS" was ground looped by her pilot to avoid hitting another P-47 at Gushkara, India. The P-47D-23-RA (42-27539) suffered a bent prop and a snapped port main strut. DORIS was assigned to the 81st FS, 81st FG in the advanced fighter training role. (J.V. Crow)



(Below) This heavily stained razor-back P-47D-15-RE was assigned to the 53rd FS, 81st FG at Kwanghan, China in December of 1945. The slant-strut band has been broken to allow the display of the serial number, but the number appears to have been obliterated. (P.M. Bowers)



THE 20th AIR FORCE

The 20th Air Force was authorized and activated in Washington DC on 4 April 1944 with General of the Army Air Forces Henry. H. (Hap) Arnold in command. Gen Arnold's tenure was brief — two days later Major General Curtis E. Le May took command and built the 20th AF into a powerful strategic air force that would carry the war directly to the Japanese homeland. Gen Le May was replaced by Lt General Nathan F. Twining on 2 August 1945, but by then the end of the war was at hand.

The 20th AF conducted its first operations from India during the summer of 1944 when targets in Japan, Formosa, Thailand, and Burma were hit by heavy bombers. Other units arrived and were stationed on Harmond Field, Guam. These units were then joined by the Groups in India. Later operating from the Mariana Islands, the 20th AF conducted a strategic air offensive against Japan until the 509th Composite Group brought the war to an end by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The 20th AF had three assigned P-47 Fighter Groups: the 413th FG which operated from Ie Shima and the 414th FG and 507th FG, both of which operated from Iwo Jima. All of the Groups flew the long range P-47N with extended wings and clipped wing tips. The 20th AF was given these fighters in order to provide a long range escort for the waves of B-29s that were darkening the skies over Japan. In practice all three Thunderbolt groups spent their combat time conducting ground attack missions with the P-47 fighter groups assigned to the 7th AF. The 413th FG flew the only B-29 escort mission, a raid on Yawata, Japan, on 8 August 1945.

THE 413th FIGHTER GROUP

The 413th Fighter Group was activated at Seymour Johnson Air Field, South Carolina on 5 October 1944 under the command Lt Col George H. Collingsworth. Lt Col Collingsworth was replaced by Col Harrison R. Thyng, an 8th AF ace, on 1 November 1944. Col Thyng took the 413th FG into combat and served as its commander until the end of the war. The 413th FG was comprised of the 1st Fighter Squadron, the 21st FS, and the 34th FS.

The 413th FG conducted their training with Republic's new, long range P-47N Thunderbolt before joining the 20th AF in the western

Pacific. The Group's transfer to the Pacific was somewhat protracted and lasted from April through June of 1945. By the time the move was completed, the war in Europe had ended and the Allies already had a choke hold on the Japanese home islands. The Group was deployed to the 20th AF in order to provide long range escort for B-29s that were pounding Japanese cities and industry into ashes. Whatever the intentions, the 413th FG spent the bulk of its combat career flying light strike missions in concert with 7th AF Thunderbolt groups.

The 413th FG conducted its initial operations from a temporary airstrip on the island of Saipan. The Group's first combat mission — a strafing and rocket strike on the Truk islands in the central Pacific — was flown in May of 1945 while the Group was still moving into the theater! The Group then moved to more permanent facilities on Ie Shima in June. The 413th then began a series of strikes on radar stations, light shipping, factories, airfields, and other targets in southern Japan. In July of 1945 the 413th FG began hitting Japanese shipping and airfields in China. The Group flew its sole B-29 escort mission — to Yawata, Japan — on 8 August 1945, one day before the second atom bomb was dropped on Japan. After the war the 413th FG moved to Okinawa on 10 November 1945 where it served in the Ryuku Island occupation forces. The 413th FG was deactivated at Yontan, Okinawa on 15 October 1946.

The 413th Fighter Group was only credited with a total of 13 victories. This was perhaps due to the Group's late entry into the combat zone and the fact that the Japanese were attempting to conserve their remaining fighter forces for the inevitable Allied invasion of Japan. All 13 kills were credited to the 1st Fighter Squadron. Capt Robert H. Allen led the Squadron with three victories followed by 1Lt Leo B. Redd and 2Lt Richard P. Shaw with 2.5 kills each.

All of the P-47Ns flown by the 413th FG were left in their natural metal finish — camouflage was a thing of the past and the Jugs were faster without it. Each of the three squadrons used a playing card suit as a unit marking. The 1st FS used a **diamond in natural metal finish** on

A P-47N-1-RE (44-88042) of the 1st FS, 413th FG is parked at its dispersal on Saipan in 1945. The 413th FG joined the 20th AF in April through June of 1945 and immediately began conducting a series of light air strikes on the Truk Island group and targets in China and southern Japan.



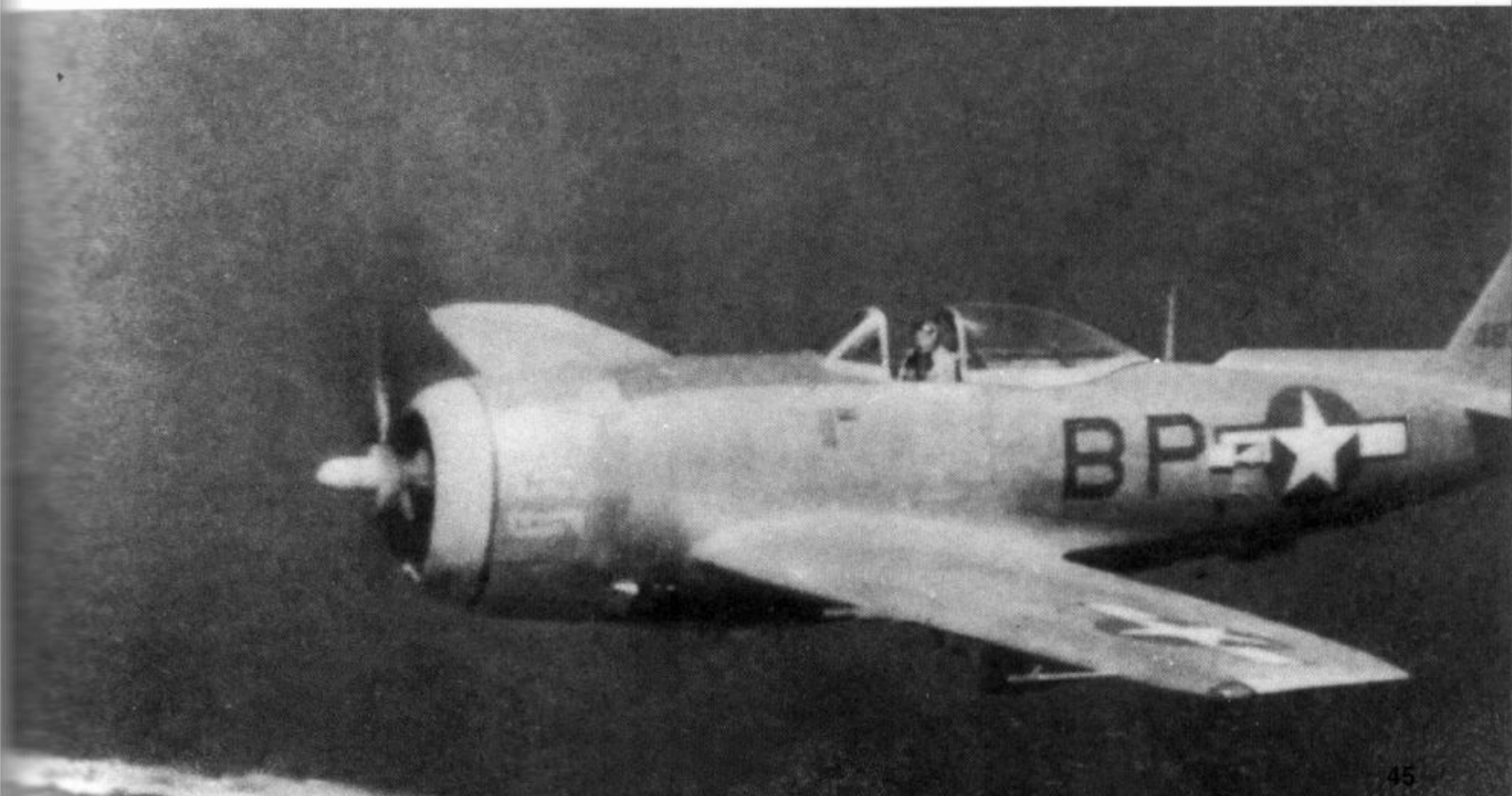


The P-47N-1-RE carries the natural metal diamond and black rudder of the 1st FS, 413th FG. The wing tips and cowl ring were also painted black — the 1st FS's unit color. (Jeffrey Ethell)

The P-47N-1-RE of the 21st FS, 413th FG leisurely cruises over Japan during the summer of 1945. The P-47Ns were originally assigned the long range fighter escort role, but were used for strafing, bombing, and rocket attacks when the B-29s switched to night bombing. (E.D. Schlueter)

a black rudder. 1st FS Thunderbolts also carried black cowl rings and wing tips. The 21st FS wore a black or blue heart on the tail superimposed over an overall yellow tail. The yellow was thinly edged in black on the aft fuselage. The cowl ring was also painted yellow and edged in black. The 34th FS used white cowl rings and tails with a black spade on the rudder.

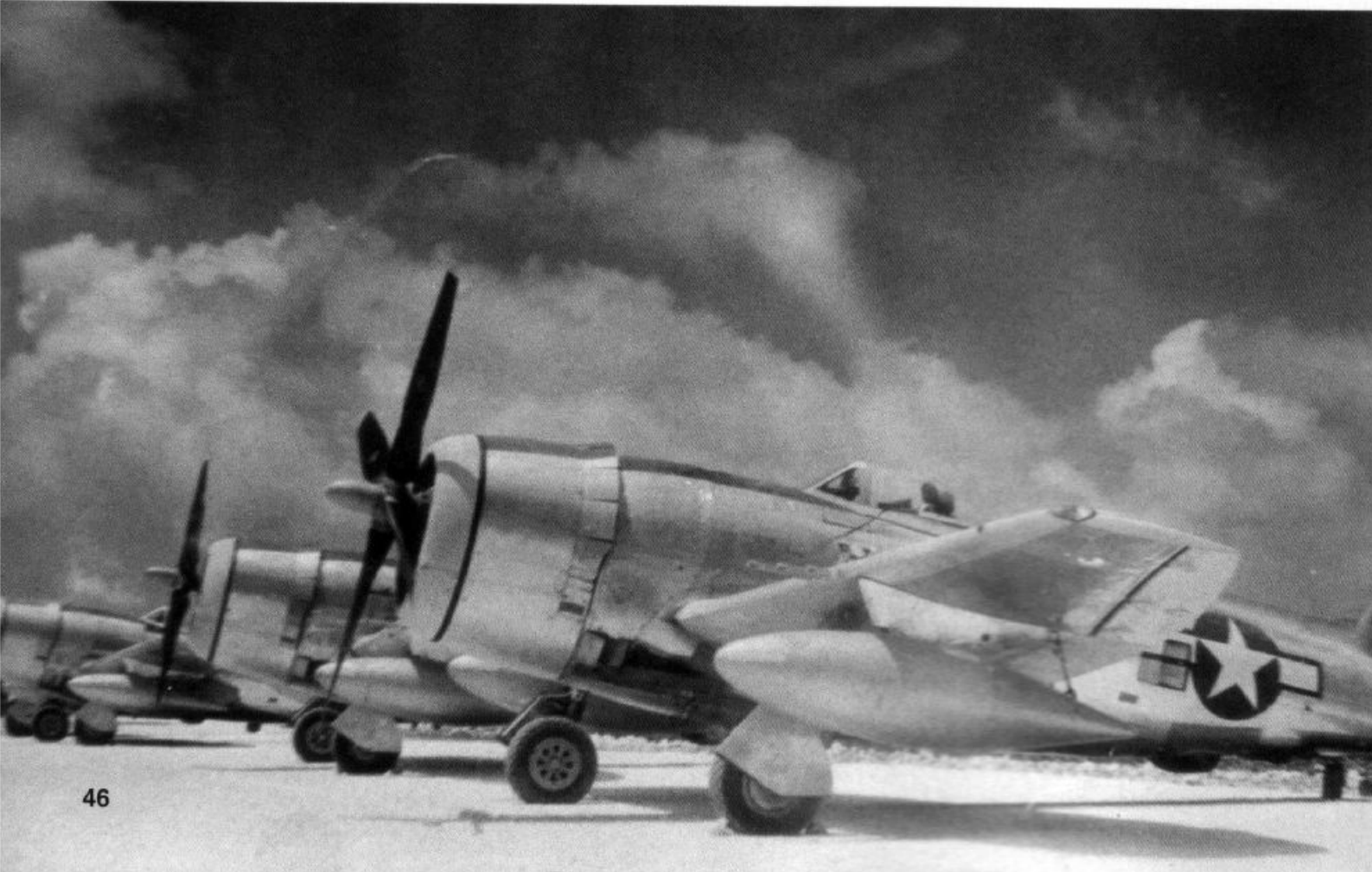
The 413th FG used a unique aircraft numbering system in that each squadron used a two letter code to denote both the squadron and the aircraft within the squadron. The first letter of the code denoted the squadron — 'A' for the 1st FS, 'B' for the 21st FS, and 'C' for the 34th FS. A second letter identified aircraft within the squadron. A Jug coded 'BR' for example would be aircraft 'R' of the 21st Fighter Squadron.





(Above) A pale blue heart on a yellow tail identifies this P-47N-1-RE as being assigned to the 21st FS, 413th FG. The 413th FG was based on the island of Ie Shima off the coast of Okinawa. (E.D. Schlueter)

(Below) P-47N-1-REs of the 34th FS, 413th prepare for a fire sweep over southern Japan during the summer of 1945. Each carries a pair of 165 gallon drop tanks under the wings. The ring was white with a thin black border. (Joe Scogna via Larry D)



THE 414th FIGHTER GROUP

The 414th Fighter Group was formed on 5 October 1944 and activated on 15 October at Seymour Johnson Field, North Carolina with the 437th, and 456th Fighter Squadrons. The 414th FG moved to the Pacific Theater during the summer of 1944 after completing training on P-47s. The Group, under the command of Lt Col Robert C. Bagby, moved by aircraft carrier to join the 20th Air Force on Guam. Like the 413th FG, the 414th FG was supposed to provide long range escort to B-29s. Again, like the 413th FG, the 414th FG operated with Thunderbolt groups in conducting light air strikes on Japanese ground installations in the north central and northwest Pacific. The Group's first missions were a series of rocket and strafing attacks on Japanese installations in the Truk island group on 13 and 22 July. The 414th FG moved to North Field, Iwo Jima and began operating from there in late July. Their first mission from Iwo Jima was a strike on a Japanese early warning radar station on the island of Chichi Jima. In early August of 1945 the Group began hitting airfields, barracks, ammunition dumps, railroad marshaling yards and rolling stock, and shipping around the Japanese home islands. The war ended shortly thereafter. The 414th FG was moved to the Philippine Islands in December 1945 and was reassigned to the 13th AF. The Group was inactivated on 30 September 1946.

The 414th Fighter Group was credited with just a single aerial victory — a Mitsubishi Ki-46 Dinah — claimed by 1Lt Robert P. Whitty of the 437th FS on 4 August 1945.

The P-47Ns of the 414th FG were flown in a natural metal finish. The 414th Fighter Squadron markings consisted of an overall yellow tail with the yellow extending 18 inches forward onto the aft fuselage. The yellow was bordered by an 18-inch black band. The cowl was also painted yellow. Individual aircraft numbers ranged from 650 to 699 and

were painted in black on the fuselage sides. The 437th FS used yellow and black checkers on the entire tail and cowl ring. The aircraft serial number was masked off which left the black numbers on a bare metal rectangle. The 437th FS aircraft numbers ran from 700 to 749. The 456th FS painted their tails and cowl rings overall blue. The blue on the tail also ran onto the fuselage and was bordered by an 18-inch black band. The individual aircraft numbers ran from 750 to 799.



(Above) The pilot of this P-47N-1-RE (44-88705) jettisoned the canopy before landing wheels up on Iwo Jima. The Jug was hauled into the maintenance area for repair, but at this stage of the war the Thunderbolt may have been simply stripped for parts. (Larry Davis)

(Below) P-47N-1-REs of the 413th FG are serviced on a PSP ramp on Iwo Jima. The P-47N was equipped to carry five air-to-ground rockets under each wing — two inboard of the drop tank pylon and three outboard — on zero length launchers. (George Lovering via Larry Davis)





(Above) P-47N-1-REs of both the 413th and 456th FS, 414th FG are lined up at Iwo Jima. All of the Thunderbolts are equipped with zero length rocket launchers under the wings. Despite being designed as

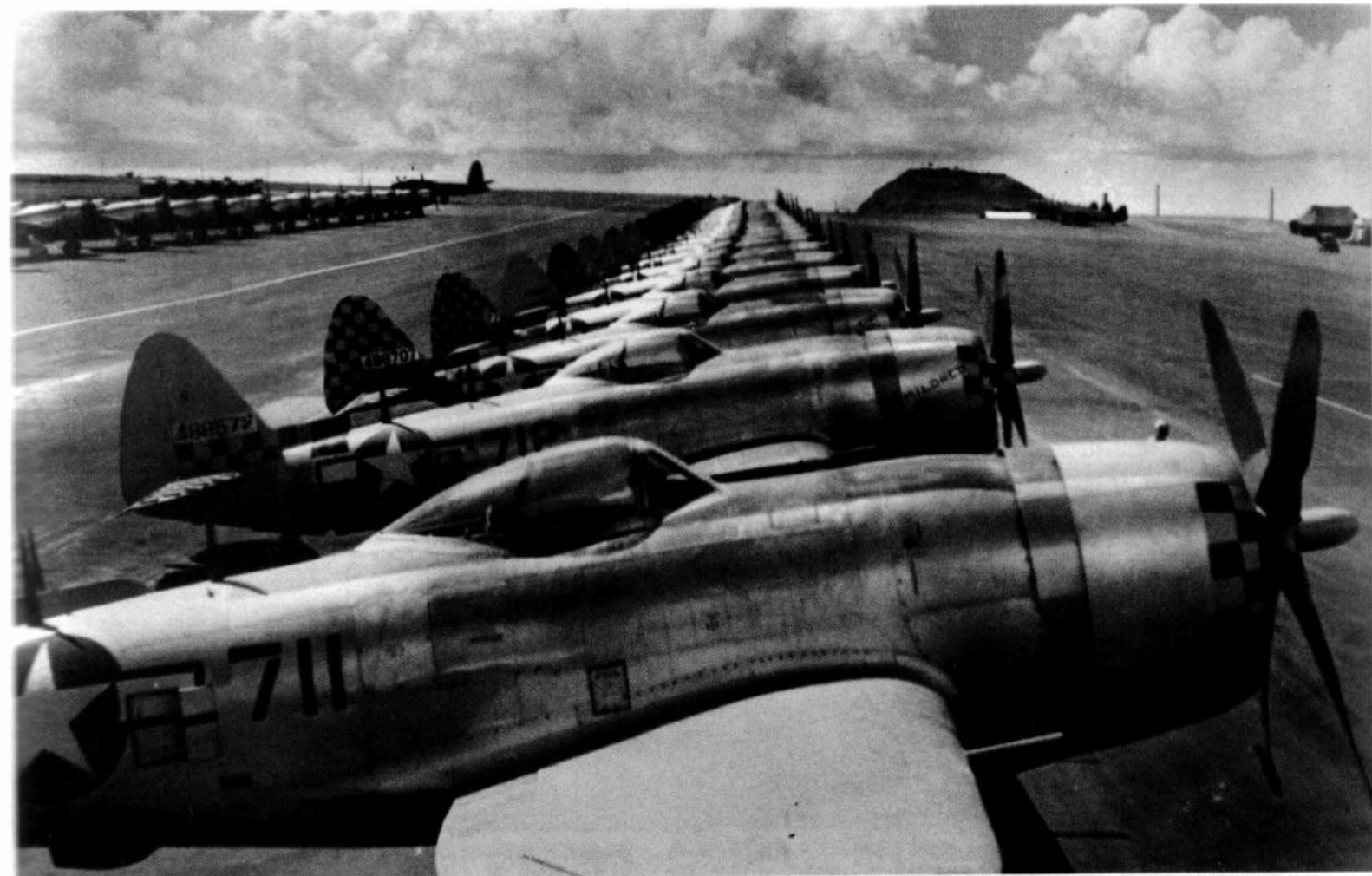
a long range escort, P-47Ns were mainly used in the ground attack role. (George Lovering via Larry Davis)



(Above) Mechanics and armorers of the 413th FS, 414th FG work on a pair of P-47Ns before a mission. Almost the entire outer wing panels of the P-47 was taken up by ammunition boxes used to feed the eight fifty caliber machine guns. Each box held up to 500 rounds. (George Lovering via Larry Davis)

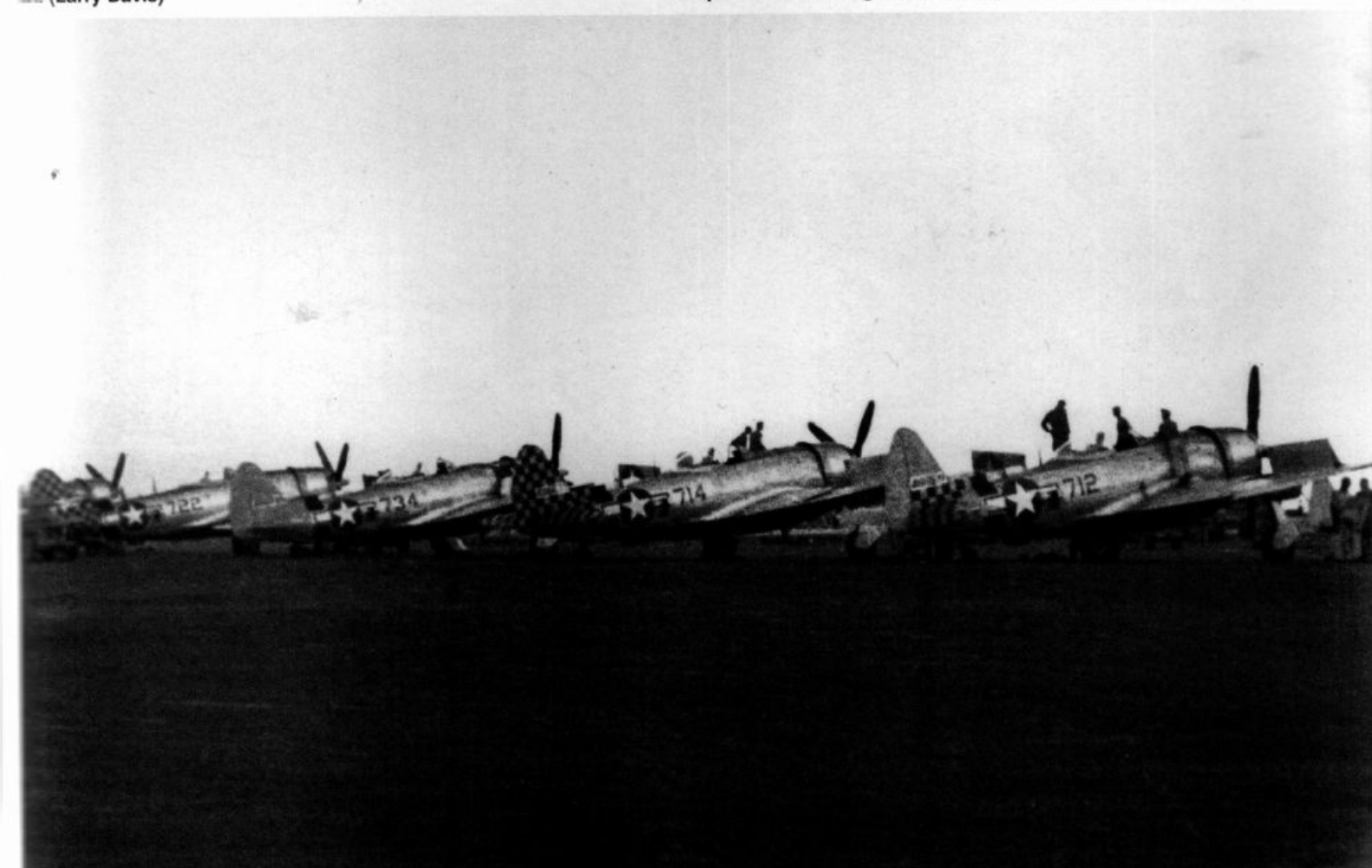
(Below) P-47Ns of the 413th and 456th Fighter Squadrons neatly lined the ramp on Iwo Jima during the late summer of 1945. By now the threat of Japanese air attack was virtually non-existent. The Japanese had decided to conserve their remaining air assets to counter the expected Allied invasion of Japan. (George Lovering via Larry Davis)





(Above) More 414th FG P-47Ns are lined up at Iwo Jima. The Jugs with the checkered tails and cowl rings are assigned to the 436th FS. MILDRED appears to be in the process of having her tail painted. The black checks have not yet been applied to her rudder and upper fin. (Larry Davis)

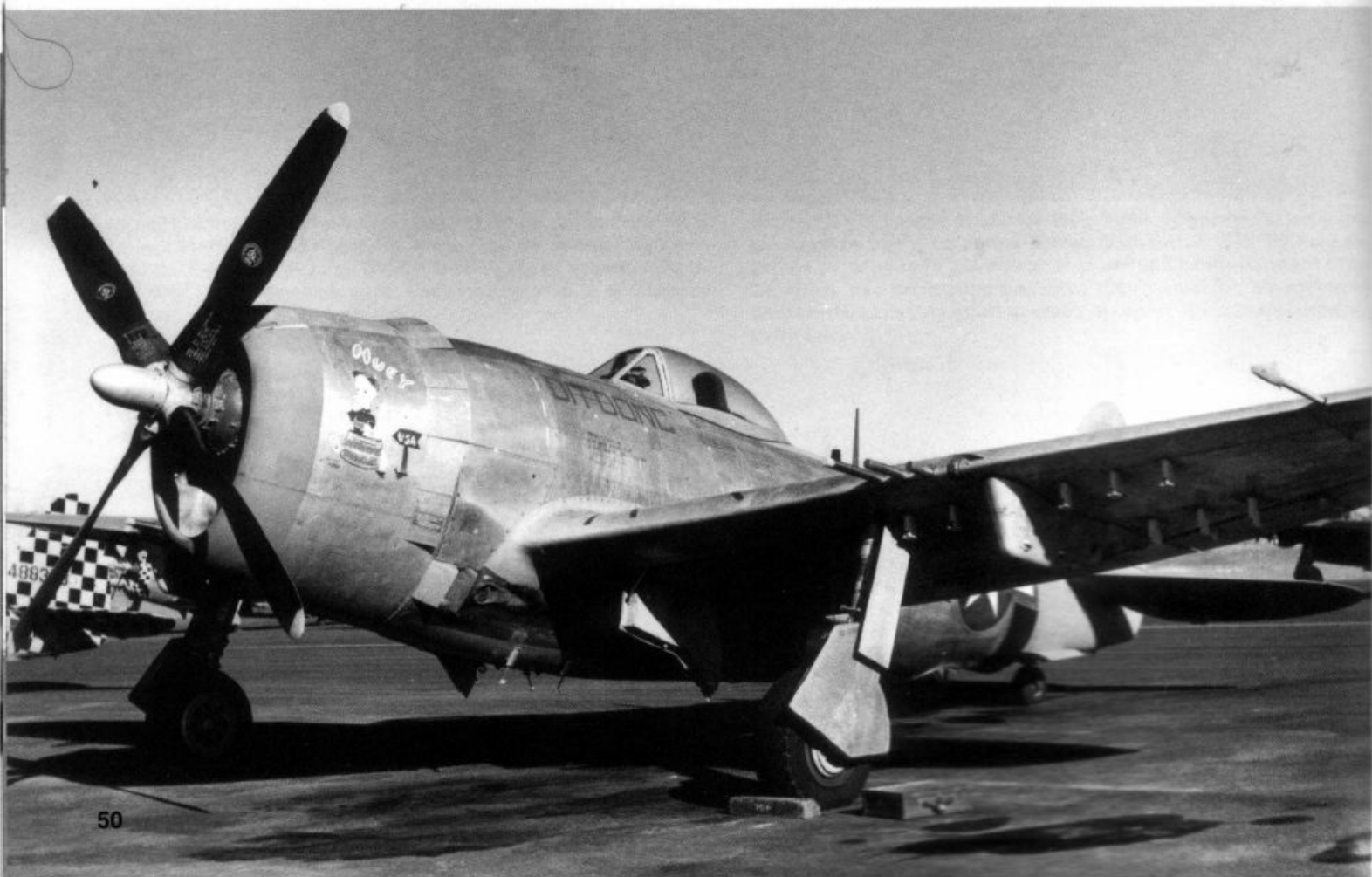
(Below) Ground crews of the 437th FS on North Island, Iwo Jima ready P-47Ns for a mission. Aircraft 712 is MILDRED — still lacking a completed tail marking of black and yellow checks. (Larry Davis)





(Above) A P-47N-1-RE Thunderbolt of the 456th FS, 414th FG slowly taxis forward after returning from a mission in late July of 1945. The dorsal fin fillet on the aft fuselage provided additional side area to help counter the increased power and torque from the engine. (Larry Davis)

(Below) HUEY was a somewhat rare P-47N-5-RE (44-88390) assigned to the 356th FS, 414th FG on Iwo Jima. The word "DITDONC" has been painted on the forward fuselage, but its meaning is not known. The P-47N was equipped with 13 weapons' points — 10 rocket stub and two bomb/drop tank pylons under the wings, and a centerline rack for a bomb or drop tank under the fuselage. (Larry Davis)



THE 507th FIGHTER GROUP

The 507th Fighter Group was formed on 5 October 1944 and was activated at Peterson Field, Colorado on 12 October. The Group, under the command of Col Loring F. Stetson, Jr., consisted of the 463rd, 464th and 465th Fighter Squadrons — all equipped with the P-47N.

The 507th Fighter Group was ordered to join the 20th Air Force on Iwo Jima and started moving in April of 1945. The move was completed by June. Combat operations began on 1 July 1945 and the Group spent the remainder of the month conducting strikes on Japanese shipping, barracks areas, airfields, rail bridges, and factories. Such was the range of the P-47N that these strikes were conducted in an arc that ranged from China, to Korea, and into the Japanese home islands.

On 2 July the 507th FG flew a 5.5 hour escort mission to Kyushu, followed by a nine hour search mission off the coast of China by a flight from the 464th Fighter Squadron. That mission was one of the longest flown by the 507th FG. On 10 July the 464th FS was sent out to fly a strike against flak positions on the island of Amani-O-Shima. During the action Major Frank J. 'Spot' Collins, an ace who had flown with the 325th FG 'Checkertails' in North Africa, was shot down and taken prisoner. F/O Neal T. O'Ginnis was killed while trying to suppress Japanese flak batteries so that a USN PBX Catalina could rescue Maj Collins.

The only DUC to be awarded to a P-47 group in the Pacific was won by the 507th for a mission on 13 August 1945. The Group conducted a fighter sweep to Keijo (Seoul), Korea. Thirty-eight P-47Ns reached the area to find approximately 50 Japanese aircraft apparently ready and waiting to tangle with the Thunderbolts. The first kill went to Capt Edward R. Hoyt who became an ace when he shot down a Mitsubishi G4M Betty bomber. Hoyt already had scored four victories with the 41st Fighter Squadron of the 35th Fighter Group. Another ace was cre-

ated when 1Lt Oscar F. Perdomo of the 464th FS shot down five aircraft while flying a P-47N-2-RE (s/n 44-88211) named 'Lil Meaties MEAT CHOPPER'. Perdomo shot down four single-engine Nakajima Ki-84 Frank fighters and one Yokosuke Type 93 Willow biplane trainer. The effect of the Jug's eight fifty caliber machine guns on the wood and fabric biplane can only be imagined. The Japanese aircraft were from the 22nd and 85th Sentais based at Kimpo Airfield near Keijo. Perdomo's gun camera film confirmed all of the victories. He became the last USAAF ace of WW II and won the DSC for his efforts.

The 507th FG finished the war with 40 victories. The 463rd FS claimed 20, the 464th FS scored 15, the 465th FS claimed 4.5, and the Headquarters Flight was given a half kill credited to Col Stetson. The top scorer was 1Lt Oscar F. Perdomo of the 464th with his five victories scored just before combat operations ceased. Perdomo was followed by 2Lt Frank D. Gryska and Capt. Frederick S. Wilson of the 463rd FS with three each. 2Lt Harry M. Steinshover of the 464th FS also claimed three kills while flying as Oscar Perdomo's wing man.

The 507th FG P-47Ns were left in their natural metal finish. All of the Group's Thunderbolts had the entire tail plane painted yellow. The 463rd FS had a **blue triangle** on the fin and rudder and some aircraft also had a blue triangle painted on the port horizontal stabilizer and elevator. The 464th FS used a diagonal **blue stripe** on the fin and rudder slanted from the upper front to the lower rear. The 465th FS carried a **black band** on the fuselage just forward of the vertical fin. All of the squadrons carried yellow wing bands thinly outlined in blue just inboard of the ailerons. The 463rd FS carried individual aircraft numbers in **100 to 130** range. The 464th FS carried the numbers **131 to 169**, while the 465th FS used the numbers from **170 to 199**. The numbers were painted in black on the fuselage sides.

Expected Goose, a yellow tailed P-47N-1-RE of the 463rd FS, 507th FG, cruises off the coast of Formosa (Taiwan) in mid-1945. A blue triangle was superimposed over the yellow tail. Many of 463rd FS's

Jugs also carried the blue triangle on the upper surface of the port stabilizer. (P.M. Bowers)

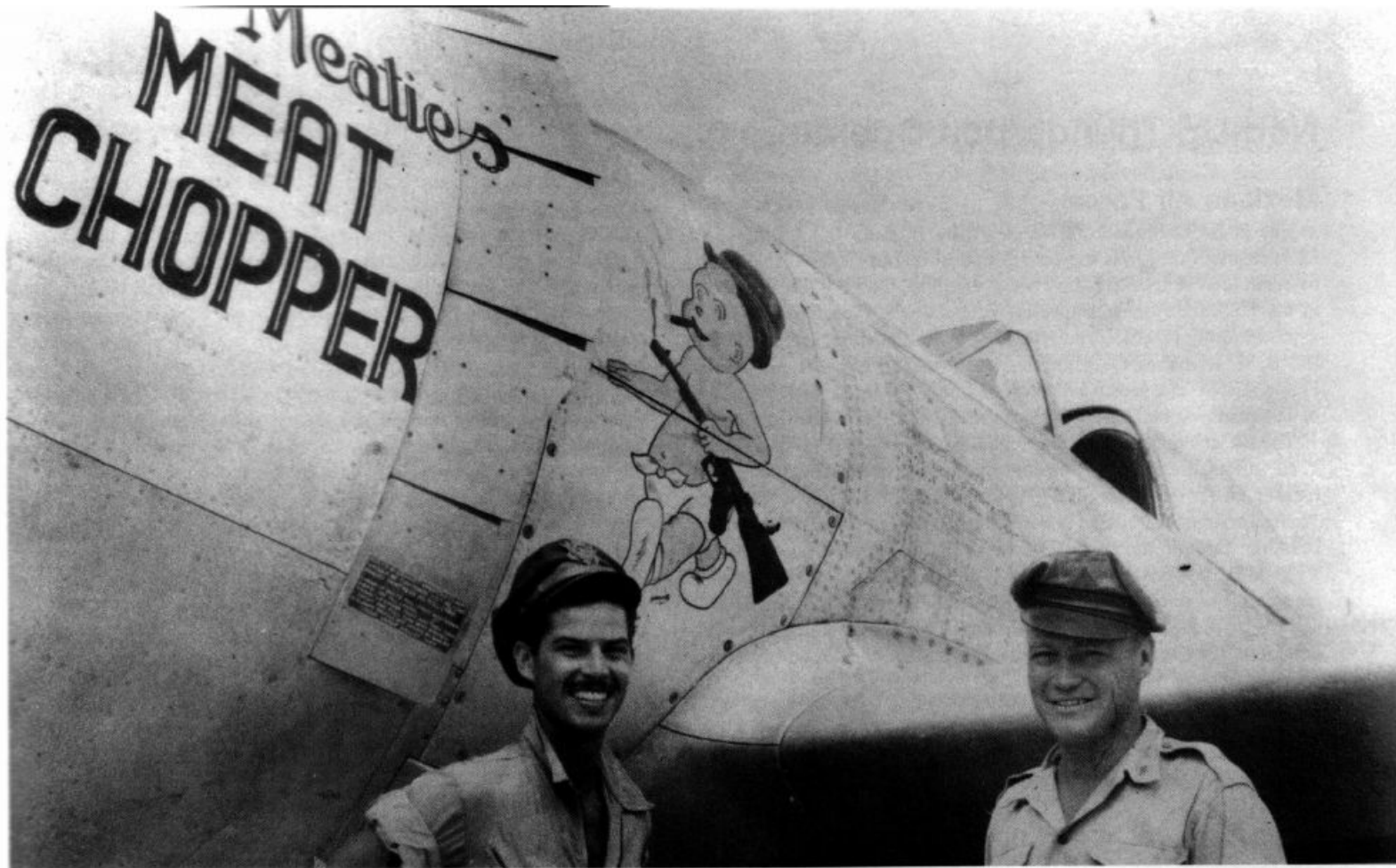




The pilot and ground crew of *Chautauqua Princess* pose in front of their charge on Ie Shima. Stenciling on the fuselage side indicates the aircraft to be a P-47N-2-RE. The next major production block of the P-47N after the 'dash 1' was the P-47N-5-RE. The 'dash 2' is believed to represent a post-production modification of the basic 'dash 1' series. (P.M. Bowers)

(Below) *MISS KANSAS* was a P-47N assigned to the 463rd FS, 507th FG. Four Japanese flags are painted on the fuselage side under the cockpit sill. (Norris Graser)





Lt Oscar Perdomo (left) of the 464th FS, 507th FG scored five kills on a single mission on 13 August 1945. Perdomo and his P-47N *Lt Meatles MEAT CHOPPER* claimed four Ki-43 Oscar fighters and a Willow biplane trainer to become the last USAAF ace of the war. The flight was Perdomo's tenth and last combat sortie of the war. What the Jug's eight .50 caliber machine guns did to the light metal, wood, and fabric Willow biplane can only be imagined. (Santiago A. Flores)

(Below) *The SHELL PUSHER* was a P-47N-1-RE (#107) flown by Capt Robert Forrest of the 463rd FS, 507th FG while stationed on Ie Shima during the summer of 1945. The Jug is taxiing forward bearing the weight of two 165 gallon wing drop tanks and a centerline 75 gallon drop tank. (Santiago A. Flores)



Non-US Thunderbolt Operators

Mexican Air Force

The 201st *Escuadron Aereo de Pelea* (Fighter Squadron) of the Mexican Air Force was the only Mexican military unit to see combat overseas in WW II. The 201st FS was equipped with P-47Ds and trained in the US before being shipped overseas to the Philippine Islands in April and May of 1945. The 201st FS, under the command of the Capt I/O P. A. Radames G. Andrade, was attached to the USAAF 58th Fighter Group as a fourth squadron. In concert with the 58th FG's three other squadrons, the 201st FS concentrated on the ground attack role.

The 201st Fighter Squadron began to get new, bubble-canopied P-47Ds in late June of 1945. In July the Squadron flew four long range fighter sweeps to Formosa (Taiwan) and on 8 August 1945, the Thunderbolts of the 201st FS flew a dive bombing mission to Karenko, Formosa. Overall, the 201st FS flew a total of 59 combat missions and 37 training missions during its tour of duty in the Pacific. The Squadron recorded 791 sorties and 1966 combat hours while dropping 369,000 pounds of bombs and expending 166,992 rounds of ammunition. The Squadron lost one P-47 and pilot in combat, had one aircraft missing in

action, and five damaged. Three other pilots were lost in accidents.

The 201st FS returned to Mexico in November of 1945, but left their Thunderbolts in the western Pacific. The US government provided over two dozen new P-47s to the Mexican government to replace them.

All P-47Ds in the 201st Fighter Squadron were left in their natural metal finish with an olive drab anti-glare panel in front of and behind the canopy. The Squadron's Jugs were at least as colorful (perhaps more so) as other Thunderbolts in the Pacific Theater. The fighters wore the standard US insignia on the fuselage sides, port upper wing, and starboard lower wing. Two wide black bands were painted on the aft fuselage and the upper and lower wing surfaces outboard of the bomb racks. Some photographs appear to show the bands thinly outlined in white or yellow. Green (foremost), white, and red vertical stripes were painted on the rudder. The **Mexican Air Force insignia, a green, white, and red triangle**, was applied to the upper starboard wing and lower port wing between the black wing bands. The point of the triangle faced to the rear. The markings were finished off with a large white scallop on the cowl, thinly edged in black, and a white horizontal band on the vertical fin. A black two-digit aircraft number was added to the cowl scallop and the fin band.



(Above) The USAAF 58th Fighter Group had three US fighter squadrons —the 69th, 310th, and 311th FS — and the 201st FS of the Mexican Air Force. The 201st FS Jugs carried green, white, and red vertical stripes on the rudder and the Mexican AF insignia on the wings opposite the US insignia. (USAAF)

(Below) A P-47D-30-RA (44-33722) of the Mexican AF 201st FS, US 58th FG is refueled on a Pierced Steel Planking ramp in the Philippines. The Jug carries 165 gallon drop tanks under the wings. (James P. Gallagher)



British Royal Air Force

Apart from USAAF fighter groups in Europe and the Pacific, the second largest user of the P-47 Thunderbolt was the British Royal Air Force (RAF). Although the British had closely followed the development of the Jug, there were some misgivings about the aircraft on the part of the pilots. RAF pilots were used to the diminutive (by comparison) Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Hurricane. Climbing aboard the seven-plus ton Thunderbolt was like scaling a small cliff. British pilots were also used to the rapier-like combat qualities of the Spitfire (and to a lesser degree, the Hurricane) whereas flying the Jug was akin to using a large meat cleaver — or an anvil. It was big, noisy, and unsubtle. For the most part, a typical American... product.

USAAF experience using P-47s in the ground attack role in Europe eventually prompted the RAF to request P-47s for use in India and Burma. The Thunderbolts were to be assigned to Southeast Asia Command (SEAC). SEAC was comprised of Nos. 221, 222, 224, and 225 Groups, plus a small component known as the Eastern Air Command. The first Thunderbolts began to arrive in theater during the late spring of 1944. The Jugs arrived in India by ship where they were assembled and used by No. 1670 Conversion Unit (CU) at Yelahanka to train new P-47 pilots. During late 1944, No. 73 Operational Training Unit (OTU) was brought on line at Fayid, Egypt to speed up the conversion process. After a working up period, No. 261 Squadron was the first unit to take their Thunderbolts into action against the Japanese. From then on, SEAC Jugs were in the thick of the action despite being at the end of a long and somewhat tenuous supply line and often facing adverse weather conditions.

Each SEAC squadron was officially allocated 16 Thunderbolts (although many had up to 20). These were divided into two flights of six aircraft each, while the remaining four served as HQ Staff aircraft or spares. While the entire squadron was often consolidated at a single location, small detachments were just as likely to be scattered about any

The RAF fielded 16 squadrons of Thunderbolt Mk I and II during World War II — all in India and Burma during 1944 and 1945. This Thunderbolt Mk II (bubble canopy) was flown by Squadron Leader W.M. Soutter of No. 42 Squadron RAF Southeast Asia Command. The Jug is carrying what is believed to be a locally manufactured 100 gallon paper drop tank under the port wing. (R.C. Jones)

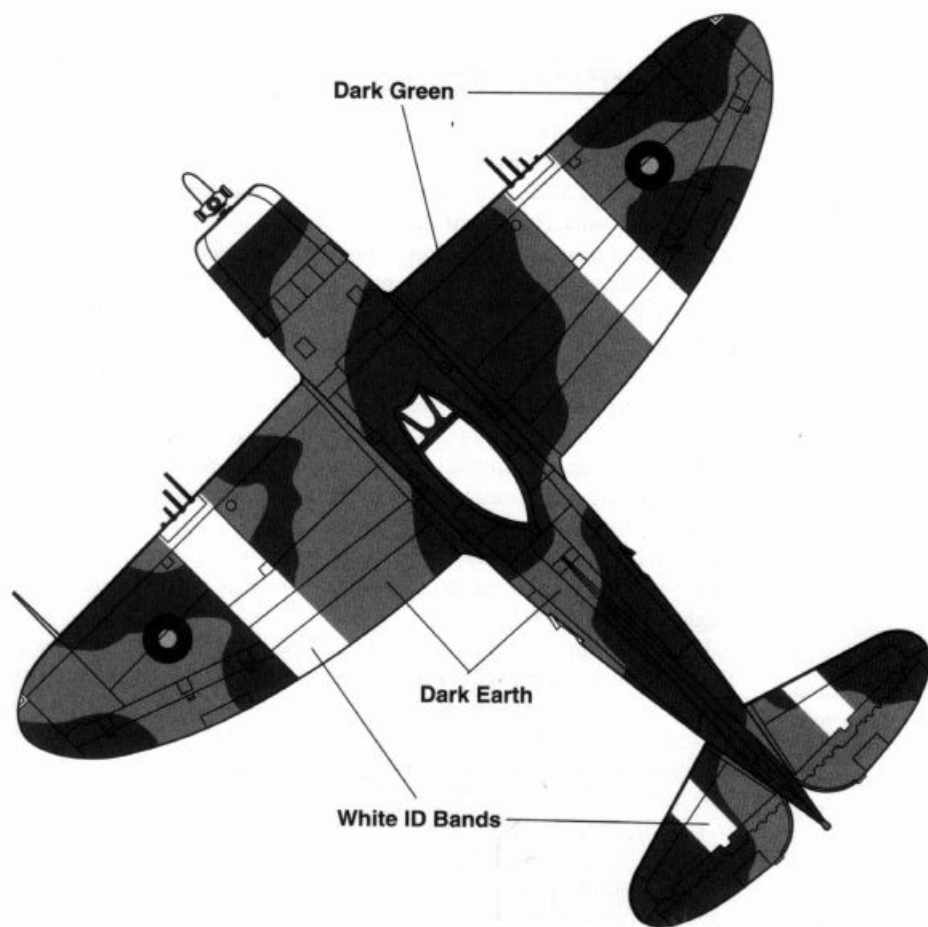
number of small fighter strips where they could provide local support to British and Indian troops. Most of these strips were packed dirt and were rendered completely unsuitable during heavy rains — especially during the monsoon season.

Like the USAAF P-47 units in Europe and the Pacific, SEAC Thunderbolt squadrons spent the vast majority of their combat time in the fighter-bomber role. Missions were flown against Japanese airfields and other fixed installations, the road and rail transportation network, port facilities, and light shipping. British Jugs were also extensively used in the close support role against Japanese troops in the field. Bomb and napalm laden Thunderbolts would fly missions known as 'cab-rank' patrols where they would fly over the front lines and wait to be called in by British troops. The Jugs functioned as flying artillery and armor, knocking out Japanese infantry and artillery positions that were holding up the advance of Commonwealth troops. Opportunities to engage Japanese fighters in aerial combat were few — partly due to the Thunderbolt's mission and partly because the few Japanese fighters that remained in the theater tended to quickly disengage if not outright avoid a fight with the P-47s.

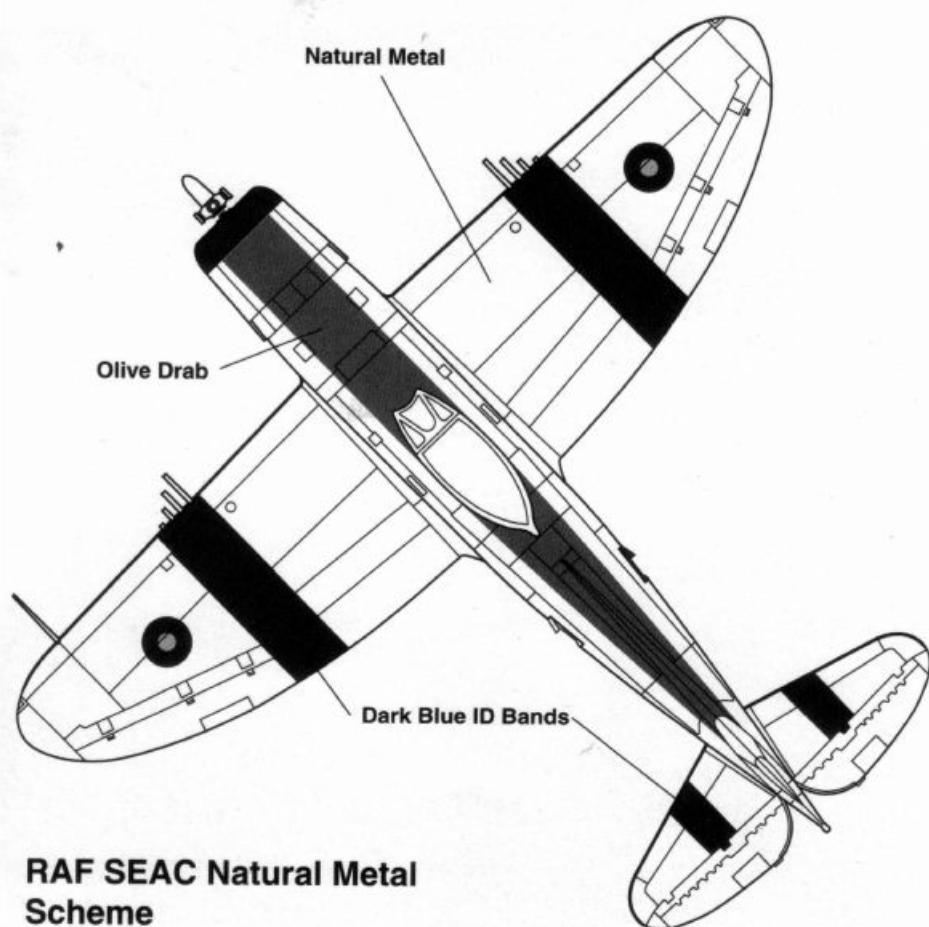
Ultimately, the Southeast Asia Command operated 16 squadrons of Thunderbolt I (razorback) and II (bubble-canopied) fighter-bombers. Ten of these squadrons became active during the latter half of 1944, while the remaining six were brought on line during early 1945. Ten of the squadrons used both the Thunderbolt I and II, while six used only the Mark II.

The first Thunderbolts sent to SEAC are believed to have arrived wearing a factory applied camouflage scheme of ANA 613 Olive Drab and ANA 603 Sea Gray upper surfaces and ANA 602 Light Gray under surfaces. These colors were the US military equivalent to the RAF colors Dark Green, Ocean Grey, and Medium Sea Grey respectively. This scheme was deemed unsuitable for use in northeastern India and Burma and was quickly replaced by repainting the aircraft with the locally produced versions of RAF Dark Green and Dark Earth on the upper surfaces and Medium Sea Grey on the lower surfaces. Both Thunderbolt I and II wore this scheme. Later Thunderbolt IIs wore a natural metal finish. Of note, Thunderbolts assigned to No. 73 OCU in Egypt continued to wear the green/gray scheme.





RAF SEAC Camouflage Pattern



RAF SEAC Natural Metal Scheme

British and Commonwealth aircraft serving the CBI also carried a modified national insignia consisting of a dark blue and light blue roundel and fin flash. Originally the roundels were dark blue and white — the RAF had eliminated the center red spot to avoid any confusion with Japanese aircraft. HQ staffs considered the center white spot to be too compromising of the camouflage scheme so the white was replaced with light blue. The 32-inch roundels were also reduced in size to 16 inches. These roundels were carried on both camouflaged and natural metal Thunderbolts. A dark blue and light blue fin flash was carried on both sides of the vertical fin — the light blue being forwardmost. The bottom of the flash was often curved to match the curve of the fin/fuselage joint. Thunderbolts assigned to No. 73 OCU wore the standard RAF insignia used in the European theater.

Staff concerns over the ability to recognize the radial engine Thunderbolt versus Japanese radial engine fighters (such as the Nakajima Ki-43 Oscar and Nakajima Ki-44 Tojo) resulted in the application of a white cowl ring, wing bands, and tail bands. The first cowl ring bands were broad at the bottom and narrow at the top resulting in raked appearance. Later cowl ring bands were of an even depth. The wing bands started out as a simple horizontal rectangle on the inboard wing leading edge that was generally visible only from the front. The bands were later applied to the entire upper and lower surface of the wing, but stopped short of the flaps. The tail plane bands also stopped short of the movable control surfaces. Natural metal finish Jugs wore black or dark blue identification bands. No. 73 OCU Jugs carried a Sky band around the aft fuselage in lieu of SEAC ID bands.

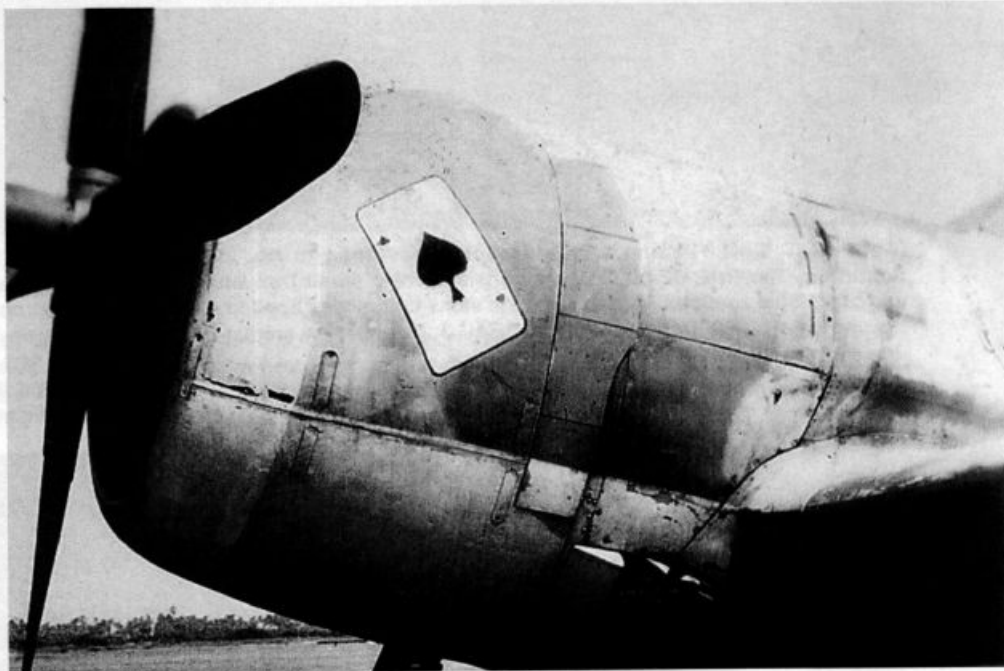
Squadron code letters, when used, were applied to the fuselage sides behind the cockpit. The code letters were painted in slightly different sizes and locations from squadron to squadron. The code letters could also be in slightly different colors ranging from white (the most common) to light gray to deep sky. Natural metal Thunderbolts usually wore black code letters. No. 73 OCU Thunderbolts usually carried a white two-digit number on the aft fuselage. Thunderbolts routinely carried the aircraft serial number in white on the aft fuselage. Natural metal Jugs carried the serial number in black. Some Thunderbolts also repeated the serial in smaller characters at the base of the vertical fin.

Nose art, in the USAAF sense, was rare on SEAC Thunderbolts owing to 'official' disapproval. Some Jugs, however, did carry simple names, unobtrusive art, or small painted metal plaques riveted to the cowl flaps or fuselage. Many Thunderbolts, especially those of Nos 31 Sqn, 73 OCU, and 81 Sqn carried the squadron insignia on their aircraft.



(Above) A somewhat dilapidated Thunderbolt Mk II undergoes maintenance in Burma in 1945. The Jug was assigned to No. 134 Squadron and was camouflaged with Dark Green and Dark Earth upper surfaces and Medium Sea Grey undersides. White wing, tail, and cowl ring ID bands were carried by all camouflaged SEAC Thunderbolts. (R.C. Jones)

(Right) No. 81 Squadron was one of the few RAF squadrons to carry a squadron marking on all of its Thunderbolts. The Ace of Spades was normally carried only on the port side of the cowl. (R.C. Jones)



(Below) Squadron Leader Fletcher of No. 261 Squadron flew this Thunderbolt Mk II (FJ*G/KL849) over Burma in 1945. Later RAF Jugs were flown in a natural metal scheme with olive drab anti-glare panels and black or dark blue ID bands. (R.C. Jones)





(Above) ZT*W/KL314 was a Thunderbolt II assigned to No. 258 Squadron. The RAF SEAC insignia consisted of a small Dull Blue and Light Blue roundel. A fin flash in the same colors was applied to the vertical fin. The ID bands used on SEAC Jugs generally emulated those of the USAAF. (R.C. Jones)

(Below) This Thunderbolt II (K*N*V/HD247) of No. 79 Squadron is equipped with a Hamilton-Standard Hydromatic propeller and carries 165 gallon drop tanks under the wings. The original RAF red, white, and blue roundels were changed to dark blue and light blue and reduced in size because they were too conspicuous — then SEAC HQ mandated the use of large white ID bands on the cowl, wings, and tail surfaces... (K.M. Sumney via P.M. Bowers)



SEAC Thunderbolt Squadron Codes

Sqdn No.	Code
5	OQ*
30	RS
34	EG*
42	AW
60	MU
79	NV
81	FL
113	AD
123	XE
131	NX
134	GQ
135	WK*
146	NA
258	ZT
261	FJ
615	KW

*Codes were not initially carried, but were added later in the war.

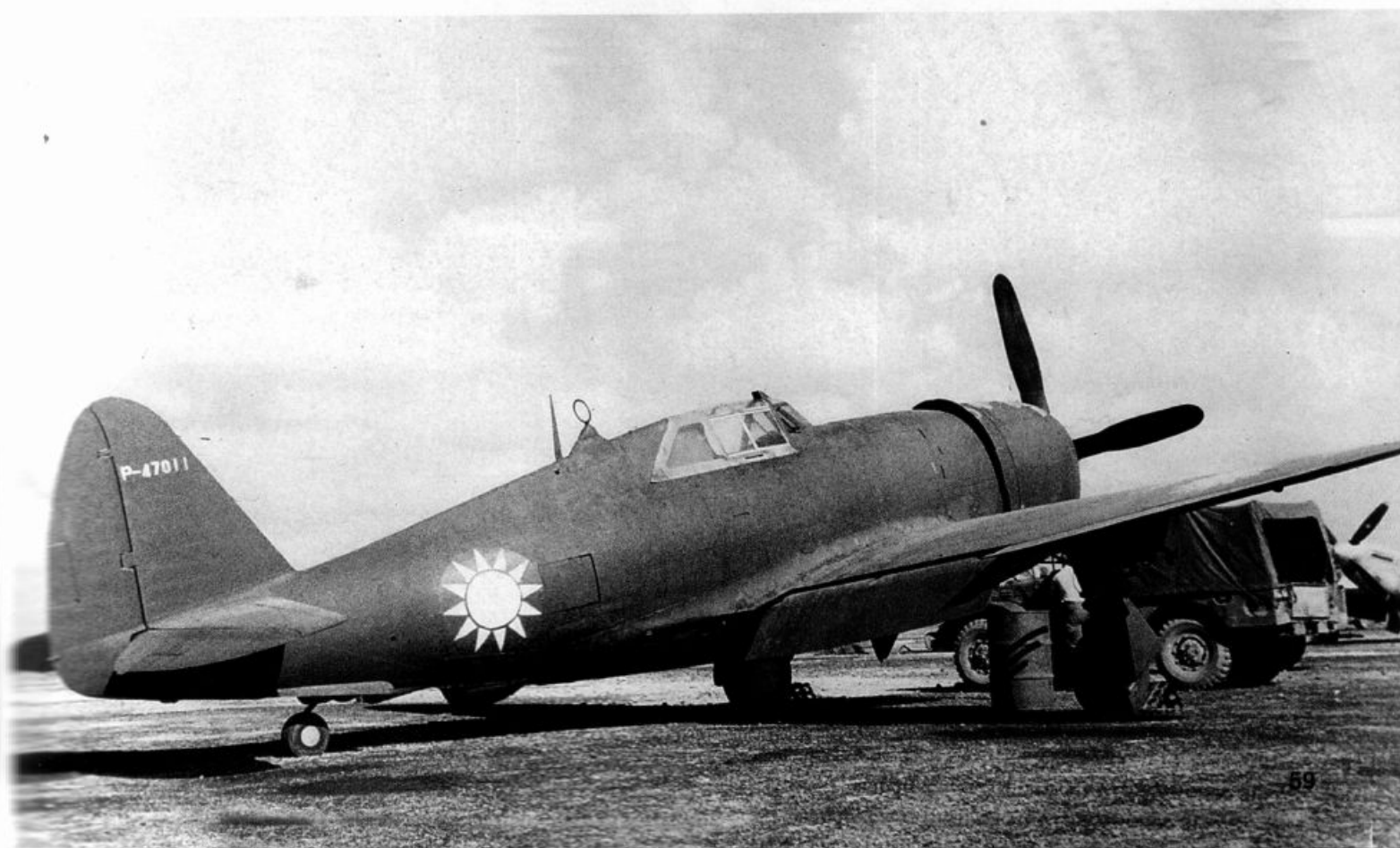
Chinese Air Force

China is not believed to have operated the P-47 Thunderbolt during World War Two, however, the Jug's immediate predecessor, the P-43 Lancer, was operated in some numbers in the fighter and reconnaissance role. Shortly after the war the USAAF was faced with the disposal of hundreds, if not thousands, of surplus fighters and bombers. China eventually received enough P-47Ds — both razorback and bubble tops — to form a complete Thunderbolt unit designated the 11th Fighter Group. These Thunderbolts, culled from surplus stocks in China, India, and the western Pacific, were operated in both camouflaged (olive drab and neutral gray) and natural metal schemes. The US markings were painted out and replaced with the Nationalist Chinese (or Republic of China) insignia — a white sunburst on a blue disk. A serial number was stenciled on the vertical fin in white on the camouflaged aircraft and black on the natural metal Jugs. Many of these P-47s were later lost during the Chinese Civil War.

After the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalist government entrenched itself on the island of Taiwan where the US government began a program to rearm the Chinese Air Force. Surplus F-47Ns (the 'P' for Pursuit designator was dropped when the USAAF became the US Air Force in 1947) were supplied to the Nationalist Chinese in the early 1950s. At least one of these fought a running, and inconclusive, engagement with a pair of Communist Chinese MiG-15 jet fighters in 1953. It was perhaps the only engagement involving a P-47 in which the Jug was able to out turn its opponent.

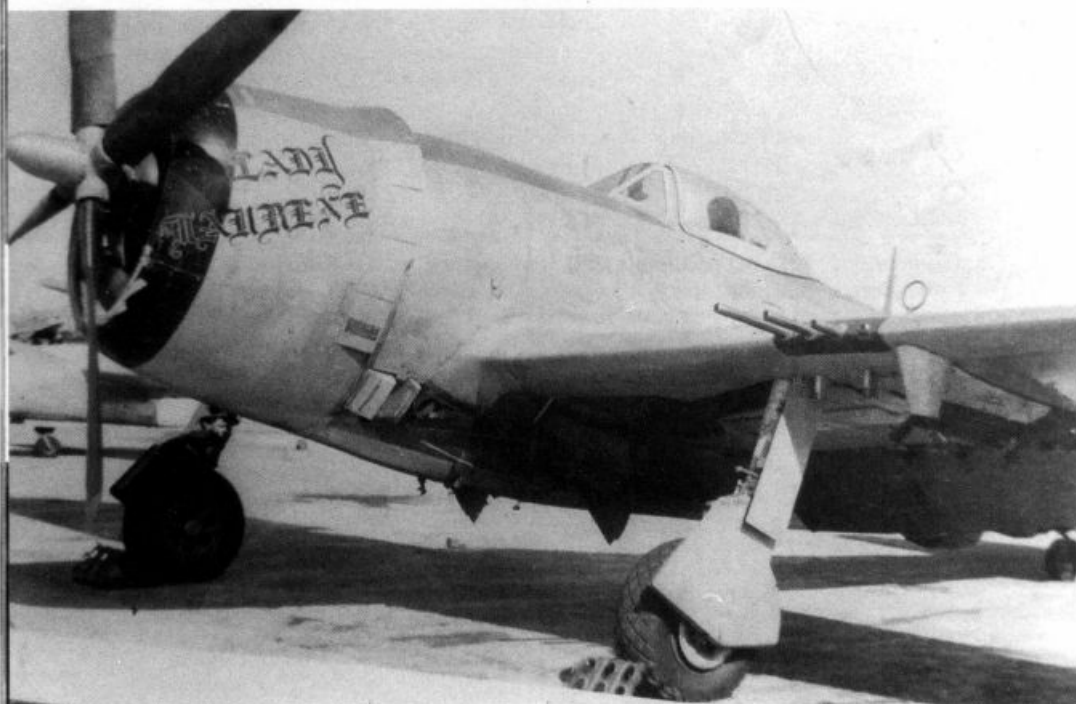
After the war, the Chinese Air Force received enough P-47s to equip their 11th Fighter Group. Most of the Thunderbolts were culled from surplus stocks in China and the western Pacific. The P-47 received the Chinese serial number P-47011, meaning the 11th P-47 received

from the US. This razorback Jug temporarily retained the original olive drab and neutral gray paint scheme of its former owners, but most Chinese Air Force Thunderbolts were flown in a natural metal finish. (D.W. Luckabaugh)



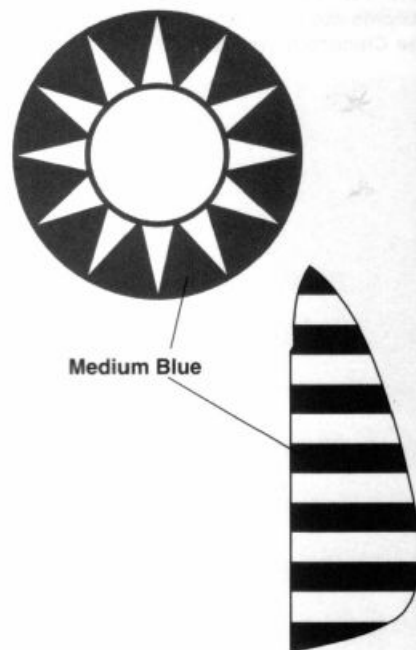


LADY MAURENE changed hands after the war and became part of the Chinese AF's 11th FG. The Chinese AF insignia — a white sunburst on a blue disk — was carried on the fuselage and the top and bottom of both wings. (Earl Reinert)



Perhaps it was bad luck to paint out LADY MAURENE's name after she was acquired by Chinese Air Force. MAURENE's final disposition is unknown, but many of the P-47s were lost in the ensuing Chinese Civil War. (Earl Reinert)

Chinese Air Force Insignia



The Peoples' Republic of China Air Museum in Beijing displays a P-47D in the markings of a P-47N assigned to the 463rd FS, 507th FG. The markings are not exactly accurate leading one to believe this Jug is an ex-Nationalist Chinese AF Jug brought down during the late 1940s/early 1950s. (Nils Arne Nilsson)

P-47 Thunderbolt Art Gallery



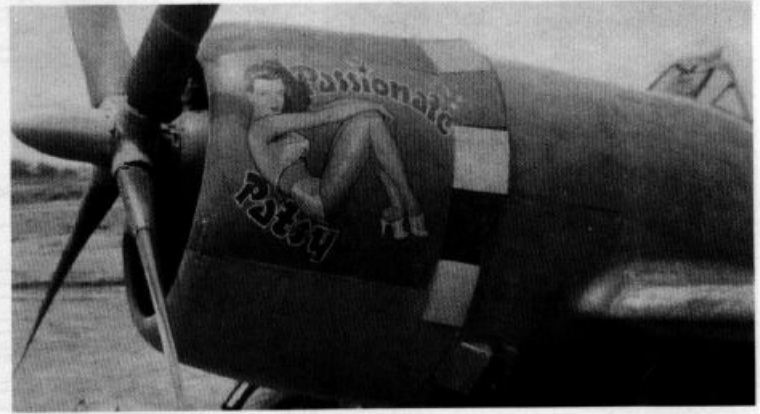
Lt William L. MacDougall of the 310th FS, 58th FG at Dobodura, New Guinea named his P-47 "Mac". (Mrs Norma MacDougall)



TOT'S TERROR was a razorback P-47D assigned to the 58th FG. The artwork consisted of a little boy wearing a suit of armor and riding a lightning bolt.



The GOLDEN GOPHER was part of the 58th FG.



Lt Ralph Barnes of the 310th FS, 58th FG flew Passionate Patsy, a P-47D-15-RA.



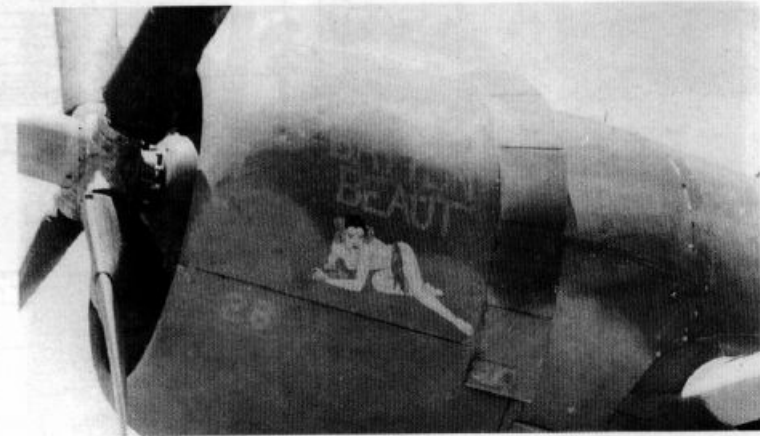
Rubber Nose was assigned to the 69th FS, 58th FG.



The 318th FG's 2 BIG And Too HEAVY pinup appeared to sit on the wing when viewed from the side.



Capt Samuel V. Blair of the 341st FS, 348th FG traded in his original FRANKIE for FRANKIE II.

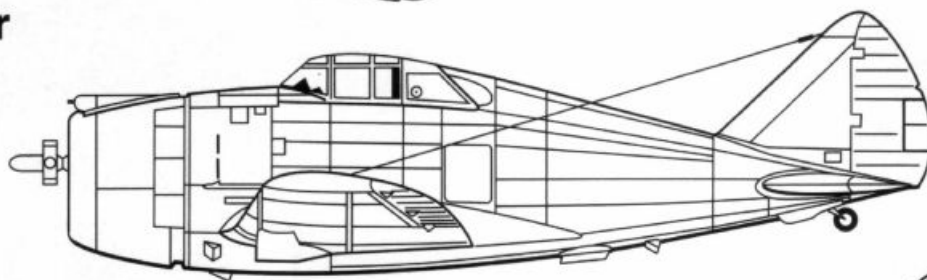


Lt C.J. Blend of the 341st FS, 348th FG flew the "BATTLIN" BEAUT.

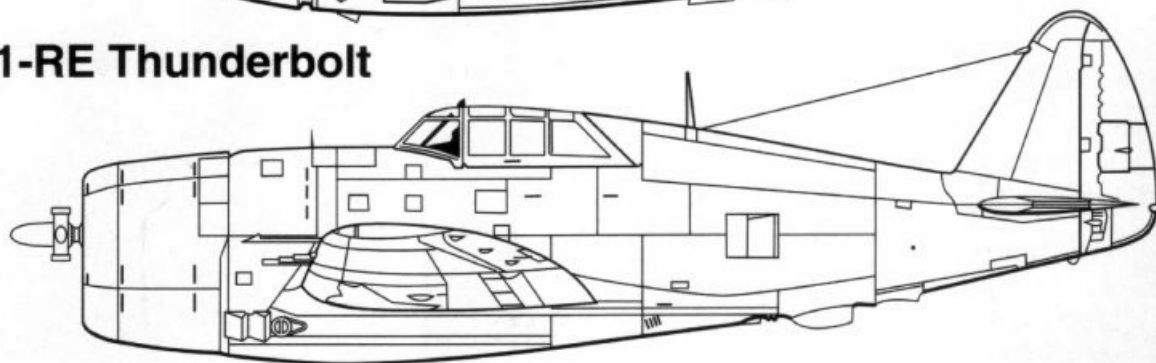
Seversky P-35



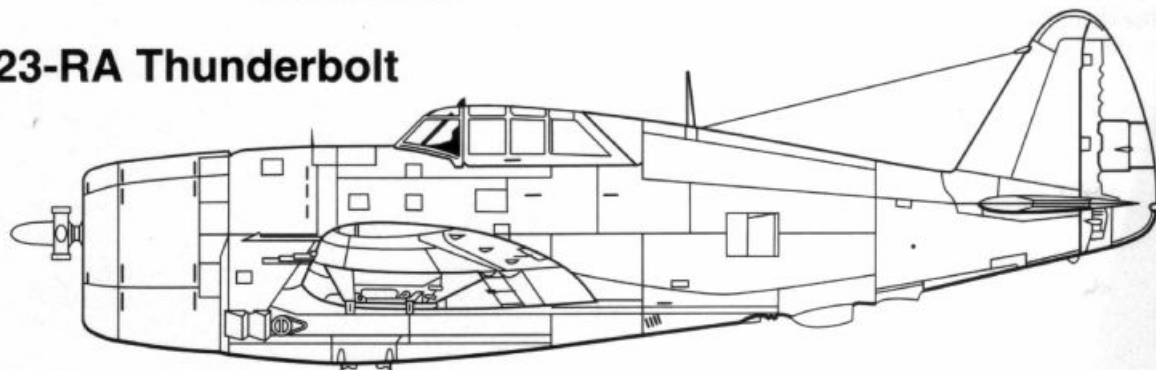
Republic P-43A Lancer



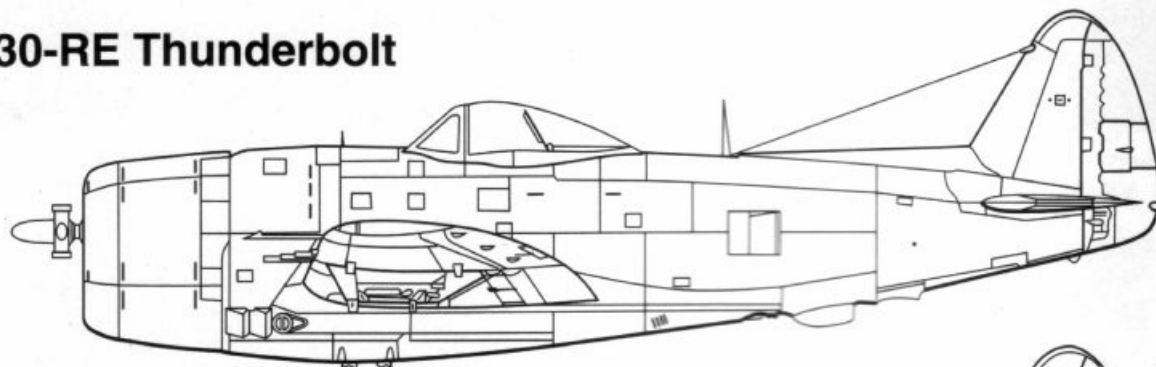
Republic P-47C-1-RE Thunderbolt



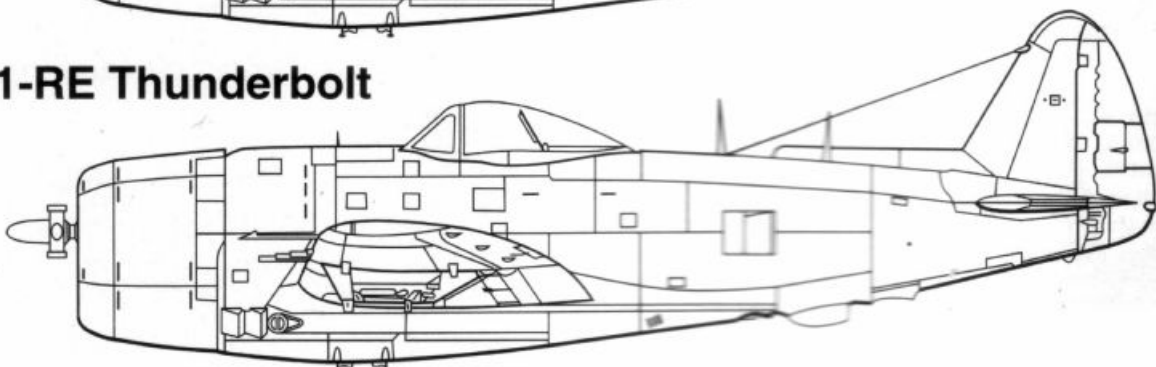
Republic P-47D-23-RA Thunderbolt

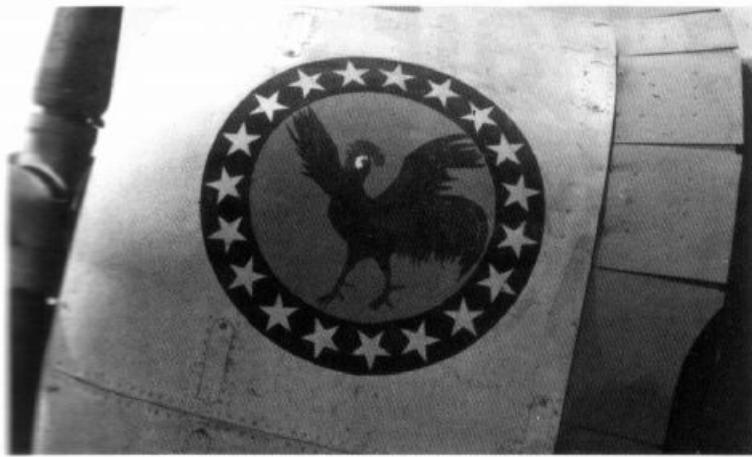


Republic P-47D-30-RE Thunderbolt



Republic P-47N-1-RE Thunderbolt





Many of the 19th FS, 318th FG Jugs wore the unit insignia, a spurred fighting cock encircled by a star-spangled ring, on a natural metal cowl panel. (Kenn C. Rust)



THEY SATISFY was the mount of Lt Jim Weir of the 19th FS, 318th FG. (Norris Graser)



Squirt was assigned to the 318th FG.



THE RUPTURED DUCK was also assigned to the 318th FG.



CAPTIVATIN' KATE was painted on the bare metal cowl of a 318th FG Jug.



JOKER was part of the 318th Fighter Group.



LIL' BITA DYNAMITE was assigned to the 73rd FS of the 318th FG.



Luacious Lady emblazoned the cowl of this 73rd FS, 318th FG Thunderbolt.

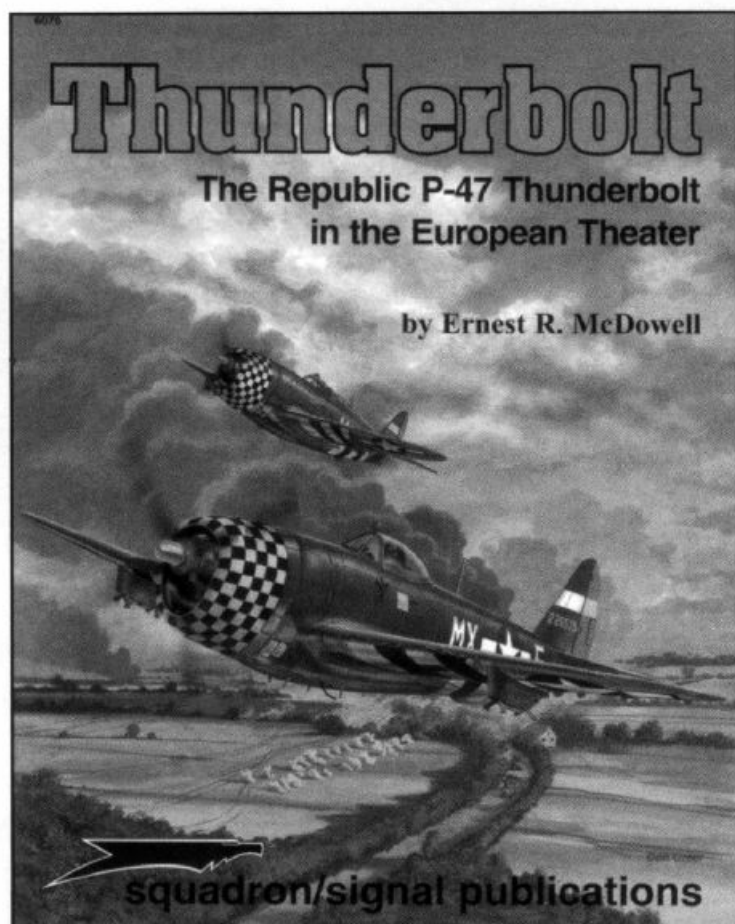
Two More Pair of Great Jugs



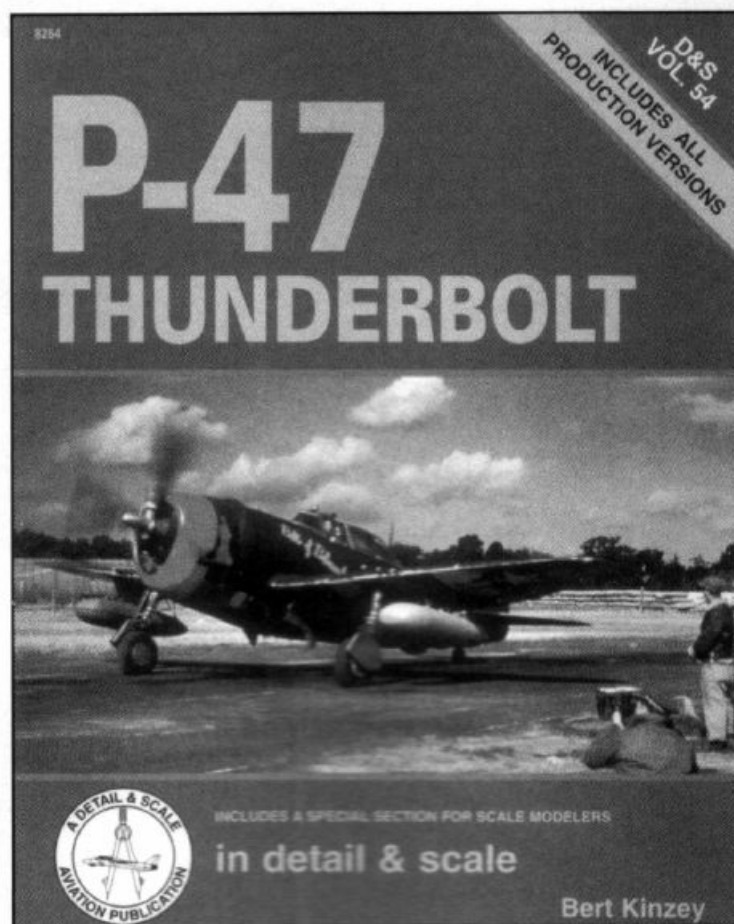
1067 P-47 Thunderbolt in Action



5511 Walk Around P-47 Thunderbolt



6076 Thunderbolt



8254 P-47 Thunderbolt

from squadron/signal publications



1Lt Henry M. Stampe of the 19th FS, 507th FG taxis his P-47N Bitter across the ramp at Ie Shima during the summer of 1945. Bitter is armed with a pair of 500 lb bombs. Lt Stampe had 2.5 victories. (J. Weir via Norris Graser)



Lt Stampe's Bitter sits on blocks and jackstands after being bellied in at Ie Shima. (J. Weir via Norris Graser)



(Above) A P-47D-30-RA (44-32731) of the 91st FS, 81st FG represents a study in silent power while parked on the crushed rock flightline at Kwanghan, China in 1944. Natural metal P-47s were given black ID bands. (Larry Davis)

(Below) A bomb laden P-47D-30-RA of the 201st FS (Mexican AF), 58th FG cruises over Manila Bay in the Philippine Islands in July of 1945. Barely visible on the upper starboard wing is the Mexican AF insignia — a red, white, and green triangle (pointing to the rear). (Albert Amido via Santiago A. Flores)



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