

HEADQUARTERS TWENTIETH AIR FORCE
APO 234, c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, California

GENERAL ORDERS)

23 January 1946

NO 13

SECTION XVI

DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION--As authorized by Executive Order 9396 (Sec I, WD Bull 22, 1943), superseding Executive Order 9075 Sec III, WD Bull 11, 1943, and under the provisions of paragraph 2d (1), Section IV, Circ No 333, WD, 1943, and letter Headquarters United States Army Strategic Air Forces, file AG 200.6, subject: "Distinguished Unit Badge, " dated 11 October, 1945, and par 4 Sec 4, General Orders 1, Pacific Air Command, United States Army, 25 Dec 1945, (Classified), the following units are cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy:

The 39th Bombardment Group (VH) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy during the period 23 May 1945 to 29 May 1945. With exceptional valor and superb skill, this Group participated in three highly successful large scale missions which had for their formidable objective the destruction of two major industrial centers of Japan, Tokyo and Yokohama. The Group accomplished its assignment with exceptional success despite some of the most fanatical and effective air opposition ever mounted by the Japanese enemy. The opposition was intensified by the need to fly these strikes at medium altitudes because of problems posed by incendiary bomb ballistics and by the unpredictable and excessive winds at high altitudes. This tactical necessity subjected the bombing aircraft to continuous attack from the largest concentration of enemy fighters and anti-aircraft guns in the Empire. Shortly after midnight on 24 May 1945, thirty-four aircraft of the 39th Bombardment Group joined in a massive assault on the manufacturing districts of Tokyo. Forty-eight hours later, on 25 May 1945, an equal number of the group's aircraft participated in a second crushing strike at this powerful center of the enemy's war potential. These two missions devastated 22.1 square miles of the target area in this, the world's third largest city. Vicious fighter attacks, supported by intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, shot down one B-29 on each of these missions, and damaged a total of seventeen more. Again, during the forenoon of 29 May, another large-scale incendiary assault was launched, this time against the industrial and dock area of Yokohama. The 39th Bombardment Group, despite the losses and damage sustained in its last two missions, mustered twenty-five aircraft for the attack. During the approach to the target, and flying at 17,000 feet, the formations were subjected to fierce and accurate anti-aircraft fire, and to thirty-seven enemy fighter thrusts. Two of the B-29's went down, and fifteen others were damaged. Despite these losses and continued harassment by the enemy, the group intrepidly fought through to the target, bombed with deadly accuracy, and aided in accomplishing the devastation of 6.9 square miles of the industrial district of the city. The great shipping center of Yokohama was written off the list of priority targets. No other missions were ever flown against it thereafter. The climactic successes of these three missions against two of the major industrial strongholds of Japanese war might was a fitting tribute not only to the coolness and skill of the gallant air crews of this group, but also to the maintenance personnel who kept the aircraft in the air and sent damaged ships back into service in an incredibly short time. Acutely short-handed, continuously improvising to overcome a shortage of tools, equipment and replacement parts, the ground crews repaired their wounded aircraft and managed to sustain them at an extraordinary level of mechanical excellence, though sometimes working continuously for sixty hours, pausing only for food and brief rests beside their planes. The valor, the superior skill, and unremitting devotion to duty exhibited by the members of the 39th Bombardment Group are in the highest tradition of the military service, and reflect great credit on themselves and the United States Army Air Forces.