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COMBAT GROUPS

The strength of an air force cannot be measured as well in terms of either personnel or airplanes as in terms of trained fighting units, capable of engaging the enemy. The unit which has been generally used during World War II has been the "combat group". And it was the group which became not only the basic measure of present strength but also the planning unit upon which projected operations were based.

The composition of combat groups varies according to the type airplane used. Even for groups equipped with the same type airplane, the composition differs occasionally because of varying operational requirements. Following is a table showing the most usual make-up--in both planes and personnel--of the principle types of combat units as of 20 February 1945:

COMPOSITION OF COMBAT UNITS

Type of Unit	Major Type of Airplane	Number of Airplanes (Including Reserve)	Number of Crews (Including Reserve)	Men Per Crew	Personnel		
					Total	Officers	Enlisted
Very Heavy Bombardment Group.....	B-29	45	60	11	2,078	462	1,616
Heavy Bombardment Group.....	B-17, B-24	72	96	9-11	2,261	465	1,796
Medium Bombardment Group.....	B-25, B-26	96	96	5-6	1,759	393	1,366
Light Bombardment Group.....	A-20, A-26	96	96	3-4	1,304	211	1,093
Single Engine Fighter Group.....	P-40, P-47, P-51	111-126	108-126	1	994	183	811
Twin Engine Fighter Group.....	P-38	111-126	108-126	1	1,081	183	898
Night Fighter Squadron.....	P-61, P-70	18	16	2-3	288	50	238
Troop Carrier Group.....	C-47	80-110	128	4-5	1,837	514	1,323
Combat Cargo Group.....	C-46, C-47	125	150	4	883	350	533
Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron.....	F-6 (P-51), P-39, P-40 L-4, L-5	27	23	1	233	39	194
Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron..	F-5 (P-38)	24	21	1	347	50	297
Combat Mapping Squadron.....	F-7 (B-24) F-9 (B-17)	18	16	9	474	77	397

In the above table, the organization of reconnaissance squadrons rather than of reconnaissance groups is shown because the group does not always comprise the same number or type of squadrons. Generally speaking, however, three or four squadrons are assigned to a group headquarters, which itself consists of about 25 officers and 50 enlisted men. Furthermore, the table omits the Air Commando Group, which is a composite organization consisting of two reduced strength fighter squadrons, one troop carrier squadron and three liaison squadrons, a total of 214 officers and 581 enlisted men. At the peak of the program, there were only three Air Commando Groups, two in China and India-Burma and one in the Far East Air Forces. These three groups are combined in the following tables with the Troop Carrier Groups because of the relative similarity of their mission. Four Combat Cargo Groups, similar in composition to Troop Carrier Groups and located in Pacific Theaters, also have been combined with Troop Carriers.

Throughout the war, there were always a few combat squadrons which were not assigned to a group headquarters. These so-called "separate squadrons" have been excluded from the tables that follow. At the peak of the program, in April 1945, there were 65 of these separate squadrons, 25 of which were reconnaissance, and 16 of which were night fighter squadrons. Fractions of groups shown in the tables indicate group headquarters to which fewer than the standard number of squadrons were attached.

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