

Chapter 11

Presidential Unit Citations

The 9th Bombardment Group was awarded two Presidential Unit Citations after the war was over. These awards authorize all the personnel assigned to the group on the dates cited in the General Orders to wear the distinctive Distinguished Unit Badge on their uniforms (or keep in their memorabilia frame or box). "The badge consists of a blue ribbon 1 5/8 inches in width and 3/8 inch in height, set in a gold colored metal frame of laurel leaves, approximately 1/16 inch in width."

GENERAL ORDER 115, HQS., 20TH AIR FORCE, 28 NOVEMBER 1945:

"The 9th Bombardment Group (VH) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. This group was directed to mobilize a maximum force to attack and destroy the industrial area of Kawasaki, Japan, on the night of 15-16 April 1945. The target represented a highly important link in the component productive capacity of the enemy upon which industries in Tokyo and Yokohama depended. Because of its strategic location between two heavily-defended areas, the objective was strongly guarded by masses of defenses both on the flanks and in the immediate target area, making the approach, the bomb run, and the break-away from the target extremely hazardous. Through their efficient, coordinated, and unceasing efforts, the maintenance crews readied thirty-three B-29s for the take-off. The flight to the Japanese Empire was made at night at low level by individual aircraft over long stretches of water remote from friendly bases, requiring the utmost in physical endurance and superior skill. All planes kept well on the course despite severe turbulence which interfered with the functioning of mechanical navigational equipment. The 9th Bombardment Group (VH) was last over the target, and the enemy defenses were fully alerted to the approximate bombing altitude and direction of attack. As a result, exceptionally close coordination between enemy search lights and heavy and light anti-aircraft guns brought the bombers under powerful concentrations of continuously pointed fire, on the route to the target, over the objective, and on the break-away. Intense and extremely accurate fire from flak boats on the flight to and away from the target added to the fierce opposition. The enemy air defenses were heaviest in the target area. Fifty-six hostile fighters, many of which made aggressive attacks, and a number of suicide planes were encountered. Two interceptors were shot down in flames, attesting to the accuracy of the group's gunners. Four B-29s were lost and six received severe damage from enemy air and ground defenses while fighting their way through to strike the vital target. Through the great courage and unyielding determination of the combat crews in destroying this target, and the skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 9th Bombardment Group (VH) contributed to the ultimate defeat of the enemy, reflecting great credit on themselves and the Army Air Forces."

GENERAL ORDER NO. 13, HQS., 20TH AIR FORCE, 29 JANUARY 1946:

"The 9th Bombardment (VH) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the Japanese enemy for the period 13 May 1945 to 28 May 1945. During this period, this



group, with consummate skill and high daring, carried out alone extensive and highly effective aerial mining operations in the enemy's vital Shimonoseki Straits area and in the strategic harbors of Northwest Honshu and Kyushu. In these operations, the group demonstrated the strategic potential inherent in aerial mine-laying, blazed the trail for subsequent mining, contributed significantly to the eventual complete blockade of the key water passage into the enemy's Inland Sea and the isolation of the important Japanese northern ports and harbors. During this period the 9th Bombardment Group flew a total of 209 mining sorties in eight effective missions. Attacking their targets every other night, averaging flights of 2900 miles over great expanses of trackless ocean, frequently through extensive areas of adverse and unpredictable weather and in defiance of enemy anti-aircraft fire and fighters, the air crews of the B-29s, performing with exemplary courage, precision, and technical skill, ninety-two percent of the 1425 mines expended were placed precisely in the predetermined strategic location. All mines were dropped from low altitudes averaging 5500 feet. The concentrated and rapid tempo of the operations is illustrated by a series of three successive missions which were flown by the group. On 18-19 May 1945, eighteen aircraft successfully mined the Inland Sea approaches to the Shimonoseki Straits. On 20-21 May 1945, twenty-two aircraft mined the outer approaches to the Straits. With four aircraft re-mining the inner approaches again, on 22-23 May 1945, the Straits were the target for thirty aircraft which dropped mines accurately in the briefed area. The Shimonoseki Straits area was the second most heavily defended zone in the Japanese Empire, since it was the main channel of entry for all shipping from China and Korea into the highly strategic Inland Sea and a virtual life-and-death keypoint in the enemy war economy. The main attack of the 9th Bombardment Group was against this arterial waterway. Flying through hazardous concentrations of enemy defenses, solving difficult navigational problems, and developing and employing new modern mine-laying techniques with uncanny skill, the group dealt grave and crippling blows to the movement of Japanese shipments of food, raw materials, manufactured war supplies, troop elements, and combat equipment both to and from the enemy home islands through the Shimonoseki Straits. The personnel of the 9th Bombardment Group were keenly aware of the strategic importance of their assignment and contributed unselfishly to the splendid operational record established during this period. An average of 84.2 flying hours per B-29 on hand was achieved. And an average of 62.2 flying hours per air crew was logged. The ground personnel performed their duties with extreme devotion, even under the trying conditions existing, displaying exceptional initiative, self-denial, and untiring effort. The 9th Bombardment Group by its efforts helped significantly to deny to the enemy the support of his conquered territories and of his possessions, to drastically reduce his productive power, to shatter his transport, and to curtail seriously his productive power and ability to continue the war. The combined accomplishments of the air and ground crews of this group in effecting the complete blockade of Japan bring great honor to the United States Army Air Forces and to the entire military service."