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HEADQUARTERS, TWENTIETH AIR FORCE, GUAM -- The Third Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, self-styled official photographers of Japan, can now be revealed as the unit whose very long range F-13 reconnaissance aircraft laid bare the military secrets of the enemy empire kept hidden from the world for many years.

On Nov. 1, 1944, an F-13 (B-29 photo ship) flew over Tokyo as the first in a series of 460 such flights made by the Third Photo during the succeeding nine and one-half months--an average of more than one and one-half successfully completed missions each day.

Nineteen enemy aircraft rose to challenge the right of that F-13 ("Tokyo Rose"), but the first pictures of the Tokyo area were safely returned to Saipan where bomb-laden B-29s were waiting target information to begin the now historic operations of the XXI Bomber Command of the Twentieth Air Force.

Third Photo planes flew 17 missions to Japan before the first combat B-29s took to the air on Nov. 24. During this period one aircraft and crew were lost in action--the first to be lost by the XXI Bomber Command in the air war against the Empire. Two other Third Photo aircraft have been lost on photo missions.

As an example of the squadron's work during July alone, the Third Photo photographed 474,705 square miles of usable coverage over the Jap mainland. Photo interpretation reports based on these pictures have been sent around the world and the distribution list numbers approximately 300 agencies including all branches of the United States military forces and many of the United Nations. The U. S. Navy interpreters using Third Photo coverage of Japan have a distribution list of about 900 addresses. At least 1,000 agencies have periodically read and passed on to others the information contained in photos taken by the squadron.

The performance of the Third Photo Reconnaissance Squadron dates back to World War I. The current war record of the outfit includes notable achievements in the Caribbean, South America, Canada, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, India, China and Burma prior to the Marianas operations as a unit of the XXI Bomber Command and Twentieth Air Force.

The squadron is an entire unit within itself complete from maintenance crews for the F-13s to a well-equipped photo lab whose staff in July turned out 179,774 negatives and 231,324 prints of aerial photography. Approximately 1,000 officers and men constitute the squadron, ranging in duty assignment from cooks to aerial photographers.

Former commanding officer of the squadron was Lieut. Col. Patrick B. Mc-

Carthy, big, hard-headed, air-wise, soft spoken ex-test pilot. A careful man with his airplanes, McCarthy was just as careful with his crews. A veteran of 8,000 flying hours, he was born in Cecil, Ohio, in 1899. He now calls Hollywood home. Colonel McCarthy assumed command of the squadron in July, 1943, and relinquished command in June this year. Now in charge is Maj. Robert C. Hutton of Sioux Falls, S. Dak. (wife lives in Denver). Major Hutton is also a veteran of 8,000 flying hours many of which were piled up in years of aerial mapping and surveying in South America.

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The story of a flying unit is a story of its airmen. First pilot over Tokyo was Capt. (now major) Ralph D. Steakley whose exploits as aircraft commander of the "Tokyo Rose" have been told in detail. First Lieut. J. D. Litton of Ranger Texas, a flight commander of the Third Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, has more flying hours over Japan and more missions (23) than any other photo pilot. He is the one who finally got the photo coverage of Okinawa after weather had foiled them for so many days.

A few weeks before the invasion of Okinawa, the squadron was assigned the job of photographing the island for the combined landing operations.

Almost a score of missions were flown from Guam to Okinawa in an attempt to get the pictures, but solid cloud cover frowned on the F-13s every time. But on Feb. 28, Lieut. Litton wheeled his big B-29 over to Okinawa and found a beautifully clear day which enabled him to photograph the island from end to end in one mission.

Then there was First Lieut. Walter L. Abbott of Des Moines, Iowa, who, under orders to get pictures of one of the Tokyo fire missions, ducked down under 8,000-foot clouds over the enemy capitol in a vain but gallant try. Soupy atmosphere spoiled his pictures and Jap ack-ack shot out one engine of the F-13.

Those pictures of ash-covered Tokyo were subsequently secured by First Lieut. Omar L. Cox, Plainville, Ill., and appeared in many publications throughout the world.

Capt. William Watson (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) was the first Third Photo pilot to take an aircraft over the northernmost Jap home island of Hokkaido. At the time this was the longest recon flight from the Marianas and required a staging stop at Iwo Jima. Since then eight other Third Photo camera ships have explored the mysteries of Hokkaido.

Then there was the unnamed gunner who may have set some sort of a parachute jump record but didn't live to obtain it. A blister blew out in his F-13 and he was sucked out of it into 50,000 feet of altitude over the Pacific. His parachute opened immediately and his horrified crew circled it for 90 minutes before it struck the water.

Directing operations for the Third Photo is 26-year-old Clarence E. Becker, a captain from Rochester, N. Y., who has earned the reputation with his squadron as having done a real job. Assigned to the Third Photo since 1942, Becker served with the unit through Alaska, the Caribbean, South America and the CBI before continuing to the Marianas, and has been successfully pilot, flight commander and operations officer, pinch-hitting at times as deputy squadron commander and squadron commander.

Best known of the Third Photo's aircraft is "Tokyo Rose"—the first B-29 to fly over Tokyo. Others have made names for themselves since, names usually closely associated with their photographic mission. For example, there is "Dark Slide" and "Double Exposure". Colonel McCarthy returned to the states in an aircraft named the "Yokohama Yo-Yo".

From the technical point of view the operations of the squadron are interesting. Each F-13 carries as many as seven cameras for adequate coverage of industries, airfields, military installations and shipping. They have six-inch, 24-inch and 40-inch focal lengths and can expose approximately 6,000 feet of film on one sortie. At altitudes of better than 30,000 feet using a 40-inch focal length lens, the photographer can include approximately one and one-half

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square miles of ground area on his 9 x 9-inch film.

When weather conditions are good, objects as small as human beings can be seen on the prints. Damage assessment photos made of Tokyo after the first incendiary mission revealed crowds on the streets. They were apparently viewing the devastation.

Before World War II, only 5,000,000 of the earth's 51,230,217 square miles had been mapped or charted. Alone, the Third Photo Reconnaissance Squadron (a part of the 311th Photo Wing, Mapping and Charting) has since the start of the war mapped approximately 3,000,000 square miles of the earth's surface.

On an average mission a Squadron plane will take-off about 2 a.m., base time. The trip up to the mainland is flown at a low altitude until the climb to altitude is begun about 250 statute miles from landfall. It usually takes a period of about one hour to climb to altitude. Sorties over targets are flown at an altitude of approximately 30,000 feet indicated, except a "hot mission" that can be briefed to go in as low as 15,000 feet. On an average, a period of eight hours is required to reach the island of Honshu. Flight lines are religiously followed, with no evasive action allowed, flak or fighters notwithstanding. One hour is about the usual length of time spent over the mainland. Flights on the average run about 14 hours long.

When the aircraft lands, film is rushed to the laboratory and developed and scanned. If it is from a damage assessment of "hot" mission, pertinent negatives are selected, prints are made, and usually are in the photo interpreter's hands within four hours after the film has left the aircraft.

Flash reports are usually complete about 10 hours after the aircraft has landed, and are sent to Washington by radio.

It is reasonably safe to assume that practically all Japanese shipping has been photographed at sometime or other by Third Photo F-13s. The total tonnage picked up on photographs is approximately 1,000,000 gross tons of merchant shipping, and about 600,000 tons displacement of naval vessels. It may easily be seen that the photographs were of considerable value in determining the Japanese Navy's order of battle, as well as providing a means of tracking and spotting particularly important vessels.

The squadron's photo laboratory had its beginnings in two humble squad tents when it first went into operation on Saipan. Today its equipment is the finest obtainable, and its housing is four quonsets set together in the form of a cross—the ideal arrangement in a land where rain and wind provide good arguments against the use of wood or canvas as shelter for highly-important and perishable photographic materials. All floors are of concrete.

The camera repair section services and keeps in order, over 1,000 units. Approximately 220 aerial cameras, 25 ground cameras, 125 intervelometers and many other such pieces of equipment are included in that total. The section built a trailer which can be taken right alongside the F-13s and two ships can be loaded on one trip. The big problem which the section is concerned with, is the rusting of steel parts, the corroding of aluminum alloys and the fungus growth on lenses. However, these conditions have been met with American resourcefulness and excellent results are obtained notwithstanding the problems involved.

The laboratory is built and manned to produce photography from one sortie every 16 hours.

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S E C R E T

UNIT: 3rd Reconnaissance Squadron      MISSION NO: 74

TYPE MISSION: Photo & weather reconnaissance of targets - KYUSHU area.

PILOT: T.C. Kendall, 1st Lt, AC

A/C TYPE & NO: F-13A #877

TAKE-OFF: 081425 Z March 1945

LAND: 090425 Z

TARGETS: Weather; installations at NAGASAKI; SASEBO; OMURA; FUKUOKA;  
TACHIRRA AIRFIELD; NOBEOKA.

RESULTS: Good

NARRATIVE SUMMARY: A/c took off from base at NORTH FIELD, GUAM, at 1425 Z hours, for mission to photograph installations on KYUSHU, and to obtain weather data. The trip out was uneventful, and the a/c made landfall SOUTH of NAGASAKI at 2222 Z. Photo runs were made on NAGASAKI, OMURA, SASEBO, FUKUOKA, TACHIRRA AIRFIELD and NOBEOKA (in the order named) and the return trip was begun, due to low fuel. The trip was uneventful, and the a/c landed DEPOT FIELD, GUAM at 0425 Z.

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S E C R E T

ENEMY OPPOSITION: None

FLAK: Total of 9 bursts sighted - over SASEBO. All were accurate as to altitude, and approximately 100 yards to the left.

CASUALTIES: None

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0303

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S E C R E T

ALTITUDE: 32,500 ft. Ind. @ 2300 Z SPEED: 190mph IAS TEMP: -22 deg C.

WEATHER:

ROUTE UP:

OVER TARGET: 3/10 to 5/10 cloud cover, with large holes.

ROUTE BACK:

OBSERVATIONS:

1. At NAGASAKI, sighted 6 large, 8 smaller vessels. Time 2225 Z.
2. Saw 3 large towers at SASEBO, at 2335 Z.
3. Sighted 4 vessels at TOMITAKA -0008 Z. Also saw 3 vessels at MIMITSU.

COMMENTS:

1. LORAN worked during the entire flight.

JOHN F. CROSBIE, Captain, AC  
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.

S E C R E T

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0304

SECRETUNIT: 3rd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron MISSION NO: 75TYPE MISSION: Weather & photo reconnaissance of KYUSHU area.PILOT: J.E. Seiler, Capt, ACA/C TYPE & NO: F-13A #585TAKE-OFF: 091421 Z March 1945LAND: 100442 ZTARGETS: Weather; NAGASAKI, OMURA, FUKUOKA, YAWATARESULTS: Excellent

NARRATIVE SUMMARY: A/C took off from NORTH FIELD, GUAM at 1421 Z hours on a mission to KYUSHU area, for the purpose of gathering weather data and accomplishing photo reconnaissance in that area. The trip up was uneventful, and the climb was started about 175 miles from the coast. It was discovered that the a/c wouldn't pressurize, necessitating runs over target areas being made at 25,000 ft. For that reason, after photographing OMURA, the target run was cut short, and the a/c was headed SE, photographing targets of opportunity across KYUSHU. After leaving the coast, it was found that the a/c could be partially pressurized - this was done, and the remainder of the trip was accomplished without further incident. Landing was made at DEPOT FIELD, GUAM at 0442 Z.

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S E C R E T

ENEMY OPPOSITION: None.

FLAK: First sighted 8 bursts over NAGASAKI - inaccurate, about 8,000 ft. below. Over OMURA, an estimated 100 bursts total - very accurate. Some was close enough to hear, boxing in the ship. Seemed to be in clusters of 4 and 8 bursts.

CASUALTIES: None

S E C R E T

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0306



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S E C R E T

ALTITUDE: 25,700 ft. Ind. @ 2250Z SPEED: 190mph IAS TEMP: -20 deg C.

WEATHER:

ROUTE UP:

OVER TARGET: 2/10 to 3/10 clouds over entire target area.

ROUTE BACK:

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Fighter strip sighted on YAKU ISLAND.
2. 10 vessels (4 DD, 4 CA, 2 CV) sighted at 20/39N - 140/03E (0232Z)  
On course of 10°, but started wide circle as a/c passed over.
3. Sighted a large number of cargo vessels in harbor at NAGASAKI.

COMMENTS:

1. Winds at altitude were as predicted.
2. LORAN worked all the way to target and back.
3. Could not pressurize a/c until after leaving target area.

JOHN F. CROSBIE, Captain, AC  
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.

S E C R E T

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0507

SECRET

UNIT: 3rd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron

MISSION NO: 107

TYPE MISSION: Photo reconnaissance

PILOT: Omer L. Cox, 1st Lt, AC

A/C TYPE & NO: F-13A #870

TAKE OFF: 281700 Z March 1945

LANDED: 290710 Z March 1945

TARGETS: Airfields on KYUSHU

RESULTS: Good

NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

A/C took off from SAIPAN. The US Fleet was seen about 50 miles south of KYUSHU. Landfall was made on island of YAKUJIMA at 2330 Z. Flew on to FUKOE SHIMA, there turned in and hit KYUSHU at SASEBO. Continued along coast passing over FUKUOKA, YAWATA, OITA and SAEKI, leaving there at 0110 Z. The trip back was uneventful. Passed over IWO JIMA on route home.

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**S E C R E T**

**ENEMY OPPOSITION:**

One t/e fighter seen below and climbing near FUKUOKI, but did not reach altitude of photo a/c.

**FLAK:**

250 - 300 bursts over YAWATA. Intense and some accurate.

**CASUALTIES:** None

**S E C R E T**  
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S E C R E T

ALTITUDE: 32,800 ft. true      SPEED: 195 mph IAS      TEMP: -45 deg C.

WEATHER:

ROUTE UP: Fair

OVER TARGET: 5/10 cloud cover.

ROUTE BACK: Fair

OBSERVATIONS:

1. US Fleet south of KYUSHU. Several F6Fs came up to intercept before identification was made.
2. 22 small boats seen off YAKIJIMA.
3. 2 fighters took off from FUKUOKI airfield.
4. Reflections seen from two airfields.
5. Several ships, mostly freighters, seen in harbors near YAWATA and along STRAITS.
6. Jap stations picked up on 6200 kc and 7300 kc.

COMMENTS: None

JOHN F. CROSBIE  
Captain, Air Corps  
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.

S E C R E T  
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**S E C R E T****UNIT:** 3rd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron**MISSION NO:** 395**TYPE MISSION:** Photo reconnaissance.**PILOT:** T.C. Kendall, 1st Lt, AC**A/C TYPE & NO:** F-13A #229**TAKE OFF:** 082155 Z Aug 1945**LANDED:** 091155 Z Aug 1945**TARGETS:** Nagasaki**RESULTS:** Good**NARRATIVE SUMMARY:**

Aircraft took off from Guam at 2155 Z to photograph Nagasaki. Aircraft flew at 1200' altitude to 21/45N - 140/45E at 0040 Z, where climb was begun to 3,000'. A/C leveled off at 3,000', 22/20N - 140/20E, time, 0054 Z. This maintained until 0355 Z, when climb to 31,500' ind. was begun. Target was photographed at 31,500 ft. ind. and the following visual observations made:

1. The North one-half of Nagasaki was covered with a white boiling smoke which towered up to 30,000 ft.
2. Approximately 10 fires were observed in the South half of Nagasaki.
3. Approximately 20 fires and two large explosions were seen through the smoke in the North half of Nagasaki.
4. Western border of smoke was parallel to and directly over river. East border was vague.
5. Three large ships, apparently undamaged, observed in Nagasaki harbor.

Before leaving Japan, aircraft photographed the following targets of opportunity: Karamoto and Kobeoka. A/C left the coast at 32/30N - 131/45E, time 0546 Z; let-down gradually and landed Guam at 1155 Z hours.

**ENEMY OPPOSITION:** None **FLAK:** None **CASUALTIES:** None**ALTITUDE:** 32,500 true **SPEED:** 195 mph IAS **TEMP:** -30 C.**WEATHER OVER TARGET:** Clear**OBSERVATIONS:** Same as above.**COMMENTS:** NoneJOHN P. CROSBIE, Capt, AC  
Intelligence Officer**S E C R E T**

**S E C R E T****UNIT:** 3rd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron**MISSION NO:** 396**TYPE MISSION:** Photo reconnaissance.**PILOT:** A.V. Kirhan, 1st Lt, AC**A/C TYPE & NO:** P-13a #077**TAKE OFF:** 121957 Z Aug 1945**LANDED:** 130910 Z Aug 1945**TARGETS:** Nagasaki - Kurume area.**RESULTS:** Excellent**NARRATIVE SUMMARY:**

A/C took off on mission to photograph targets in Japan 121957 Z.. Flew from Guam to point of climb (28/20N - 133/42E), which was reached at 0035 Z, at 5,500 ft. A gradual climb was made to 20,000 ft. and landfall made at 31/20N - 131/13E, time -234 Z. Photo runs were made over the targets as briefed and pictures taken with excellent results. The mainland was left at 32/15N - 131/34E for the return to base. Flew at 23,000 ft. on return trip letting down gradually to Guam where landing was made 130910 Z.

**ENEMY OPPOSITION:** None **FLAK:** None **CASUALTIES:** None**ALTITUDE:** 20,000 ft. ind. **WEATHER OVER TARGET:** 3/10 clouds, target clear.**OBSERVATIONS:**

1. 4 large vessels, possibly warships, plus numerous small vessels in Nagasaki harbor, time 0300 Z.

**COMMENTS:** None

JOHN F. CROSSIE, Capt, AC  
Intelligence Officer

**S E C R E T**