

中華民國的空軍

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中華民國的空軍

ROC AIR FORCE



E-2K型預警機整補組合訓練

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Separated by Language and Culture but United by a Common Goal

THE LEGACY OF THE FLYING TIGERS

By Margaret Mills Kincannon

It began a bit earlier for Du. While in his sophomore year of university in 1940, he became aware of a special program that involved recruiting Chinese aviation cadets to be trained as pilots in cooperation with the USAAF. Du's primary interest was not to become a pilot, since his career was already planned, but to have a chest X-ray to determine if he had tuberculosis as part of the qualification process. However, he passed all the physical, academic, and other examinations and was accepted to take part in the program. Because he was too embarrassed to drop out, he began training at the Republic of China Air Force Academy in Yunnan Province in early 1941. It was during this time that he changed his name to Du Kai-mu. Afterward he was sent to the United States for additional training in Arizona and later in Colorado.

At war with Japan's superior troops for four years by the time Du entered the program, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist troops had by this time suffered repeated losses. Although numerically superior, they were lacking in supplies, equipment, training and that would allow them to defeat the enemy. The equally debilitated air force was incapable of adequately supporting troops on the ground or opposing the enemy's planes that bombed Chinese cities and other targets. To aid in solving the problem, Generalissimo Chiang brought Claire Lee Chennault, a civilian who had resigned from the U.S. Army Air Corps with the rank of major, to China under contract as his military advisor. It became Chennault's mission to transform the ROCAF into an effective fighting force capable of fending off the invaders by training Chinese pilots to shoot down Japanese airplanes using his tactics of "defensive pursuit". The American Volunteer Group (AVG) that gained fame as "the Flying Tigers" for their daring displays of courage and skill was the result. This mercenary unit was in existence from April 1941 to July 1942, when it was replaced by the China Air Task Force that was officially inducted into the USAAF. The CATF was disbanded in March 1943 and replaced by the 14th Air Force with Chennault, now a major general, placed in command.

It was soon afterward that Chennault, with the Generalissimo's approval and support, implemented a strategy to aid the CAF by taking his plan even further than previous efforts through the creation of the Chinese-American Composite Wing, made up of both Chinese and American members working and flying side by side. An Operational Training Unit (OTU) was established in India and operated by the 14th Air Force to train Chinese fighter and bomber crews for combat operations according to the American model and using American planes. Duplicate command structures were established at all levels. In addition, CAF combat and maintenance crews trained at the OTU with the units to which they would be assigned. On completion of the training of each complement, the American and Chinese officers who had acted as instructors then served as group, squadron, and flight commanders of the combat units, which would then move to China. The CACW eventually consisted of a bombardment group and two fighter groups of four squadrons each. Chennault's intrepid airmen would go on to earn their place in aviation history by carrying on the legacy of the Flying Tigers.

These were the events that worked together to unite Cpl. James H. Mills and Sub-Lt. Du ("Tu" in American records) Kai-mu in the 3rd Bomb Squadron of the 1st Bomb Group, Chinese-American Composite Wing, that was activated on February 22, 1944.

(To be continued)



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